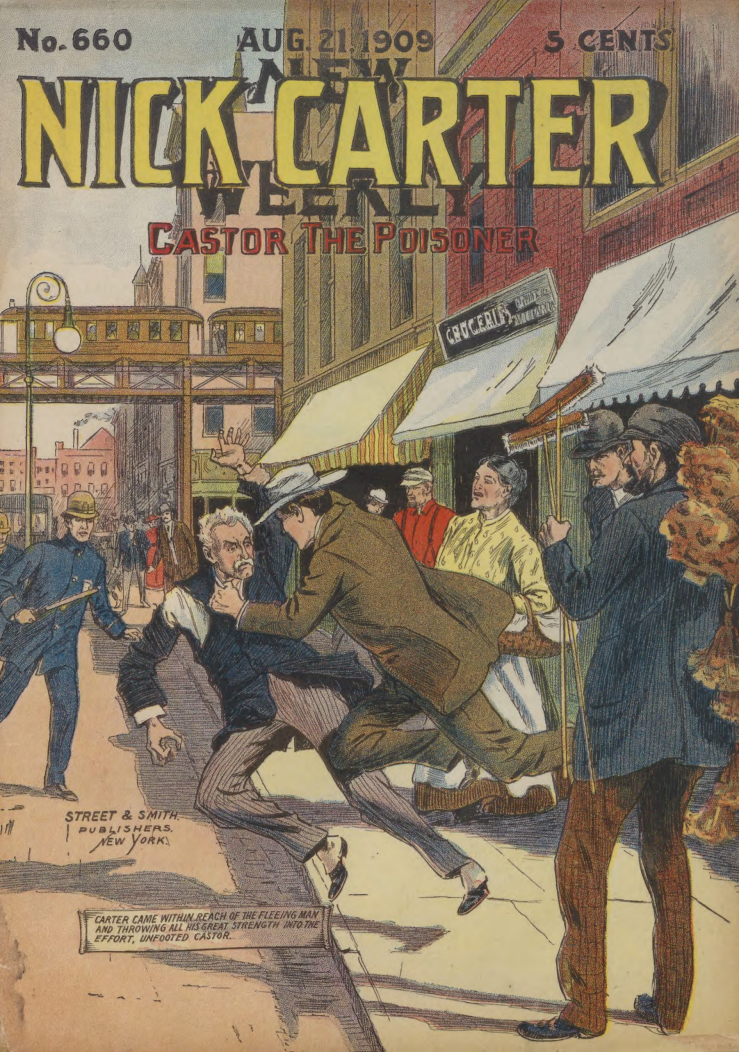
No. 660 AUG. 21, 1909 5 CENTS

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

CASTOR THE POISONER



STREET & SMITH
PUBLISHERS.
NEW YORK.

CARTER CAME WITHIN REACH OF THE FLEEING MAN AND THROWING ALL HIS GREAT STRENGTH INTO THE EFFORT, UNFOOTED CASTOR.

NEW
NICK CARTER
WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, *79-89 Seventh Ave., N. Y.*
Copyright, 1909, by STREET & SMITH.
No. 660. NEW YORK, August 21, 1909. Price Five Cents.

CASTOR, THE POISONER;

OR,

Nick Carter Wins a Man.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A CRIMINAL AT LARGE.

"I don't know how it was done, Carter," said the commissioner, swinging about in his chair and facing the detective, who had just entered the office in response to a request that he should present himself at headquarters. "The great part of it is, that it *was* done. Castor *has* escaped. The man fiend *is* again at liberty. He is roaming the streets, somewhere in the city, without a doubt, and something must be done to apprehend him again before he has an opportunity to commit more crimes. The thing has been kept absolutely quiet. The public does not know anything about it. There was very little said about the arrest of Castor, fortunately, and so there need be next to nothing said about his escape. Only those officers who are directly connected with the administration of affairs here at headquarters are wise to what has happened, and they have been instructed to say nothing. The fellow is a perfect devil, Nick; not alone for the crimes he commits, but for his ingenuity and his unquestionable abilities. He was here, and now he is gone. We had him, and now we haven't. That is the whole thing in a nutshell. Now, I'm going to put it up to *you*."

"Very kind of you, I'm sure," replied the detective, with a smile.

"Oh, well, you needn't get sarcastic about it. That won't do any good."

"I didn't mean to be sarcastic, commissioner; not in the least. But Castor isn't easy to catch. I caught him once, with the aid of Billy Kennell, but that was the first time he ever *was* caught, and he will be ten times more on his guard now than ever before."

"I know."

"He will be a harder proposition to tackle now than he ever was."

"I haven't a doubt of it."

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

"You'll have to answer that question for yourself, Nick. I blame you a little for this escape."

"Blame me? How so?"

"You knew the man. You knew how hard he would be to hold, and——"

"But, my dear commissioner—pardon me for interrupting you—I considered that when the man was

captured and turned over to your own men, my duty was done."

"So it was—in one sense. In another it was not."

"How do you make that out?"

"You knew the man. You knew what his abilities are. You knew that he would be hard to hold; and doubtless you knew that he would make an effort to escape."

"I did know all those things—and, what is more, I warned the officer to whom I delivered Castor that he would have to be watched night and day, or he would slip through your hands."

"I don't suppose they realized the importance of what you said."

"Well, is that my fault? I think not."

"Discussing the matter won't help us to find the man, will it?"

"Not at all."

"Will you undertake to find him again?"

"Surely."

"Then that settles it."

"Tell me all you know about the escape, commissioner."

"It isn't much. When you and Kennell captured the man, after you had frightened him almost into fits——"

"Pardon me again, commissioner. He wasn't frightened into fits, as you express it. The man is literally an insane person."

"Oh, I am ready to admit that. I'm ready to admit anything at all about him, as far as that is concerned."

"He was merely startled into one of his paroxysms, that is all. The nearness of death, as he supposed, from his own poison threw him into such a wild state that he no longer had any control over himself, and the result was that he confessed all that he had done. An alienist would say that he was merely undergoing one of his periodical fits of violence, induced by the circumstance."

"Well?"

"Castor is an insane person, but he is suffering—if the word is not misapplied in his case—from a strange form of dementia. He is so splendidly educated, he has been such a student, he is so learned in many branches of knowledge, that the gift which many insane persons have, which we call cunning for want of a better term to apply to it, amounts, in his case, to genius. I suppose you have read Stevenson's book of Jekyll and Hyde."

"Who has not?"

"Well, this isn't another case of that kind; but the two are alike in one particular—in the sense that was never appreciated by the readers of Stevenson's book."

"How do you mean?"

"When Doctor Jekyll appeared as Mr. Hyde he was not disguised, as we understand the application of the word; he was transformed."

"I understand."

"In that imaginary case there was only one transformation; in the case of Castor there are many transformations. When Stevenson's character appeared in the guise of Hyde, *he was Hyde;* he was no longer the good doctor. He was another and a different man."

"I know."

"There was absolutely no likeness between the two. They were different men, having an entirely different appearance. Why?"

"You answer, Nick."

"Because they were governed by different emotions."

"I am not even trying to discover what you are getting at. I am waiting for you to explain."

"Castor, as Castor, is a man without emotions—and that, if you will permit me to call your attention to it with emphasis, is a remarkable thing of itself. Stop a moment and picture to yourself, if you can, a man who is without emotion."

"I should call it a crazy idea that a man *can* be without emotions."

"Never mind that part of it; try to picture the fact."

"Well?"

"I doubt if you can do it. Can you imagine a man who is never amused, who never smiles, who is never annoyed, who never gets angry, who does not feel sorrow or joy, who has no likes or dislikes, who has no appreciation of food or drink save that they satisfy a demand in the same sense that inhaling and exhaling a breath satisfies a demand? Can you imagine a person who is quite dead, but who is still walking about the streets with every outward appearance of being fully alive?"

"No; I don't think I can."

"It is difficult, I admit; but if you could bring your imagination to the point of picturing such a creature as I have just described, you would have a good representation of Lionel Castor as he really is."

"Then how does he commit the crimes he is credited with?"

"That is what I am coming to, commissioner."

"Well?"

"It is part of the form of insanity with which he is afflicted; non-emotional."

The commissioner laughed aloud.

"We hear all the time of emotional insanity," he said. "I confess that this is the first time I have heard of the non-emotional type."

"I don't know as alienists would agree with me. I suppose, as a matter of fact, they would not do so—but the description I am attempting to give to you describes Castor's condition and conduct—as well as his wonderful cunning—in the only way I can explain it."

"Go on, Nick. You have interested me, anyhow."

"We will refer again to Stevenson's character. Whenever he experienced the emotions which belonged to Hyde, he became Hyde; he was no longer the doctor. He was transformed into another being, in appearance as well as in incentive and actual deportment. He did not look the same."

"Well?"

"Castor, as Castor, is without emotion. The instant an emotion is felt by the nerves within that body he inhabits, he *ceases to be Castor*, and he becomes another person—and the big point I wish to make is this: He can become almost as many different characters as there are different emotions for him to experience."

"I see what you mean; but, all the same, I don't think I understand it."

"Take Billy Kennell's experience with the man; take that alone by itself."

"Well?"

"The first time Billy ever saw the man, he appeared at the City Hall as James Charles Spaulding. He was in every sense—outwardly—a gentleman; quiet, unassuming, courteous, and all that."

"Yes."

"The man was then under the emotion of pleasure induced by a contest with me. He was in the act of calling upon a high official. He was so influenced by that emotion that he had ceased to be anything else than what he represented. The next time Billy saw the man, Castor was experiencing the emotion of elation over the success of the two crimes he had committed, and was on his way to call upon the sister of the woman he had killed. Now, the outward appearance of the man, if you stopped to analyze it, was not materially changed from that in which he had shown himself at the City Hall, and yet, as keen a detective as Kennell is, he would not have associated the two, if a certain accident had not happened."

"What was that?"

"A man in City Hall Park collided with Castor; it angered him. He made a certain gesture which Kennell recognized. Billy followed him."

"Well?"

"Lieutenant Kennell will tell you, as I do now, that later, when we rounded up the man, and when I excited him by a threat to use his own poison on him, he became, on the instant, still another person—not at all like the characters we had seen."

"Look here, Nick. I want to tell you something."

"Well?"

"I have nothing to do with all these fine points you make. I am here to administer the functions of my office. It is your work, and the work of my men, to find and arrest the criminals. I have nothing to do with theories. I don't care a hoop about who or what Castor is, has been, or may be. I only know that he is a dangerous criminal, from the viewpoint of this office; that he was a prisoner, and is now at large; that I want him arrested. Life is too short for me to monkey with theories."

"All right. I thought you wanted to discuss it."

"I don't. Thank you all the same. I want the man. I want him here."

"I told your men to bring him down here, to headquarters, before."

"I know you did; but they didn't do it. They didn't take you seriously."

"Well, if you will tell them to take me seriously next time, things will work out better, commissioner," said Nick, with a dry smile.

CHAPTER II.

BILLY KENNELL GETS FIVE LETTERS.

"Tell me how Castor got away from you, commissioner," said the detective. He had risen to take his leave, but turned about when near the door to ask this question.

"As I said before, there is very little to tell. He was kept at the station house instead of being brought directly here, as you suggested. It was a toss-up whether they would bring him here or take him to Bellevue—so they kept him there, meaning to await more competent authority. The captain of the precinct was not at the station house at the time."

"I see."

"Castor's paroxysm had passed off. He was perfectly tractable. There seemed to be no reason why he should be watched more than any other prisoner, and it is usually believed to be quite sufficient when a

man is locked up. The station to which he was taken is one of the old ones. When they went after Castor, in the morning, to haul him out, he wasn't there. That is all there is about it. The cell door was unlocked and open about an inch."

"As you say, the only really important feature about the affair is the fact that Castor is at large. It doesn't much matter how he got away. Punishment meted out to one of the officers who had him in charge would not bring the prisoner back again."

"No; but it might help to keep the next one."

"I think the lesson of this case will do as much in that respect as the punishment."

"Possibly."

"Commissioner, I've an idea that we will not have any more of Castor's particular line of crimes to follow up just at present."

"Heaven knows I hope not."

"I think he will be inclined to keep very quiet for a time. He may even leave the country."

"Well, if he does that, we'll do all we can to speed the parting guest. But why do you hold just those views, Nick?"

"Because I think that the character of Castor's madness will render him peculiarly sensitive to the fact that we have discovered his methods. Heretofore he has worked under a cloud of mystery, and he has gloried in it; but now that cloud has been drawn aside. His methods have been revealed. His poison is known. His mysteries no longer puzzle us."

"Well?"

"I remember that when Byrnes was at the head of the Detective Bureau, he had a case in which this same poison was used. But that has nothing to do with what I was about to say."

"What was that?"

"It is my idea of the character of Castor's madness that now he will use all his efforts in an effort to work out some new scheme of mystery. Committing crimes as he has been in the habit of doing will no longer interest him, since there is no more mystery about it. The incentive of mystifying the police is lost. Crime, for the sake of crime, does not interest the man; it has been the mystery with which he has surrounded his acts that has given him the incentive."

"Then, if you are correct, we may hope to be reasonably free from his acts, for a time—until he has had time to think up something new."

"Yes."

"But you think he *will* conceive some new plan?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Then it behooves us to find him, just the same."

"Certainly."

"All right. There is your case. Do what you please with it."

"If Castor does happen to be entertaining any murderous designs, just at the present moment, they are directed against one of two persons; you may rest assured of that."

"Yourself and Lieutenant Kennell, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Well," said the commissioner, with a grim smile, "that ought to please you. I believe it does please you, usually, when a bloodthirsty individual is looking for your gore."

The detective did not smile in response to this sally. He replied:

"It does please me, commissioner, in a double sense. It narrows my territory of search; it brings the criminal to me instead of compelling me to look all over the world in search of him. But there is another and a wider sense in which it pleases me still more."

"What is that one?"

"It perhaps saves other people from danger. If a criminal is looking for me, for reasons of revenge or otherwise, he forgets his animosity toward the world in general in his eagerness to find me. Then, again, I am, by reason of my training and my manner of life, much better equipped to battle against men of that stamp than the common run of humanity. Where another person would fall an easy victim to such a man as Castor, I might not even be in danger."

"I don't understand that point of it."

"In the first place I am forewarned. I am always on my guard. I do not permit my vigilance to slacken for a moment. My caution is a trained caution, whereas the caution of an ordinary individual is of the spasmodic kind."

"Yours is certainly a generous way of looking at it, Nick."

"I don't think I look at it so from generous motives; rather from humanitarianism. I believe I'll go down to the City Hall and call on Billy."

The detective found Lieutenant Kennell, as usual, behind his desk at the end of the corridor; and the latter rose to receive him when he entered.

"Glad you blew in, Nick," he said. "I've got a hunch that Castor has escaped. I haven't heard a word, either. Is it so?"

"Yes; it's so. What gave you the hunch, Billy?"

"This."

"What is it?" asked the detective, as the lieutenant extended an envelope toward him.

"Oh, it's just a short note that I received this morning. I got it in rather an unusual manner, though."

"How was that?"

"Found it under my plate at the breakfast table this morning. Nobody seemed to know how it got there—and I don't believe anybody but the person who put it there does know."

Nick opened the envelope and extracted the sheet of paper that was inside it. It was in reality but a half sheet, and there were only two lines of writing upon it. They were:

"This message is to convince Lieutenant William Kennell that even in his own house he is not beyond the reach of my hands."

That was all. The note was not signed. The handwriting was clear and distinct. It told on the face of it that no attempt had been made at disguising it.

"Very much to the point, isn't it?" said Nick, smiling.

"Not more so than this one," replied the officer, extending a second envelope.

"What! Another?"

"Yes."

"Of the same character?"

"Read it for yourself."

Nick extracted the contents of the second envelope, and read:

"This is to notify Lieutenant William Kennell that he is not more secure at his office than in his own home."

"Where did you find this message, Billy?" asked the detective.

"Here; on the top of my desk when I arrived at the office."

"Our friend isn't losing any time, is he?"

"I should say not."

"Well, all I have to say is——"

"Wait a minute, Nick. Read this one."

"What! A third?"

"Uh, huh. Read it."

"Read it to me, Billy. Doubtless it is like the others."

"'This is to apprise Lieutenant William Kennell that a pair of watchful eyes are upon him every moment of the time.'

"I think it is getting interesting."

"Say, do you suppose that chap thinks he is going to scare me? Eh?"

"If he does think so, Billy, he hasn't proven himself a very good reader of character. How did that last message get here?"

"It isn't the last one. It is only the third one."

"Do you mean to tell me that there are more?"

"Two more."

"All received by you in one way or another since breakfast?"

"Yes."

"How did that third one get here?"

"It was brought in by a boy off the street. He said a man gave him a nickel to hand it to me."

"What is the fourth one, and how did that get here?"

"The contents of the five notes are relatively the same. The fourth one was found in the corridor outside the door there by a gentleman who was entering. He handed to me."

"Somebody you knew, Billy?"

"Oh, yes He had nothing to do with the note, any more than the mere finding of it on the corridor floor."

"What about the fifth?"

"The fifth one came by mail; was posted in the general post office about an hour ago."

"Well, here, doubtless, comes a sixth." The detective smiled as he pointed toward a uniformed messenger boy who was approaching the officer's desk.

"Lieutenant William Kennell?" the boy asked, in his business-like manner.

"Yes," replied Billy.

"Here is a message for you. No answer. Sign there, please." The grimy finger indicated the line in his book where he wished the lieutenant to put his name.

"Wait a minute," interrupted the detective. "Oh, sign your name, Billy. I didn't mean that you shouldn't do that; but don't break the seal of the envelope."

He reached out and took the envelope; then he gave it back to the boy.

"Young man," he said, "here is the envelope back again with the seal unbroken. Here, also, is a half dollar which you can drop into your jeans. Now, I want you to walk out of this building by the same route you used in entering it. You can do that, can't you?"

"Sure."

"Twirl the envelope in your hand as you go along. If anybody should stop you and ask you a question about it, answer in whatever way you please, only if it should happen to be the same person who gave you the

note to deliver, take off your cap and scratch your head. I will know what the gesture means."

"All right, mister. I'll do all that. Anything more?"

"No. Not a thing. Just do as you are told. I merely wish to discover if the man who gave you that note to deliver is on the lookout for you. Now go along. I'll follow you after a moment, but you need not look back to see if I am doing so. Just forget all about me."

"Oh, I'm on."

As the boy went from their presence, Nick turned to Kennell, and he said, with a smile:

"Really, Billy, I'm getting jealous of you. Castor is paying you too much attention. I am wondering why he selected you, instead of me, for the recipient of the notes. But here goes after the boy. I haven't much hopes that I will accomplish anything on this lay, but it may as well be tried. See you later."

Then Nick followed the messenger boy out of the City Hall.

CHAPTER III.

THE DEADLY BEETLE.

The boy started across the park toward the Postal Telegraph Building, twirling the unopened envelope in his hand as he had been directed to do. He reached the Broadway side of the park and paused at the curb for an instant, to await the passing of some teams and vehicles, and then a man approached him and spoke to him.

Nick was not far distant; still he was not near enough to hear what was said.

But the messenger boy raised his cap from his head and stood so for an instant, and Nick knew that the man was the same one who had given the letter to the boy; and therefore he did not wait to question the messenger further, but when the lad moved away, followed the man who had spoken to him.

The man was *not* Castor. Of that the detective was assured at once; but he might be a person who was in communication with the criminal. He had not offered to take back the undelivered envelope.

To the surprise of the detective the man turned directly toward the City Hall again, and presently mounted the steps toward the main entrance. He passed inside, and moved rapidly along the corridor toward the mayor's office.

Nick Carter, who was only a little way behind the man, saw him approach Kennell, who was standing just outside the rail which divides his desk from the main part of the office.

The man made some sort of gesture; Nick did not notice, at the time, what it was; but instantly there was a commotion, and Nick saw the lieutenant seize the fellow and back him against the wall, where he held him so that he could not get away.

Instantly Nick was beside them. Fortunately, it happened that there were no others in that office at the time, so there was no chance for the thing to get into the papers—a circumstance which was to be avoided, at all hazards.

"What's up, Billy? What's the matter?" the detective asked, at once.

"Nothing, I guess," was the quick reply, and he released his hold upon the stranger. "Say, Nick, that Castor fellow makes me tired. He'll have me dotty before he gets through."

Billy wheeled upon the man he had attacked so summarily, and demanded:

"Who are you, anyhow?"

"John Smithson."

"Why did you make that gesture of holding your chin between the thumb and finger of your right hand?"

"I was told to do that, sir."

"Oh; you were! Who told you to do it?"

"The gentleman who gave me the envelope to send to you."

"What did he tell you about it?"

"He said it was a secret gesture that you would understand, in case I had to come here to you. He said that as soon as you recognized the sign, you would do something toward getting me a job."

"Oh; he did, did he? Well, he was a blooming liar. When you see him again you can tell him that I said so. What else did he say?"

"Nothing much. He told me to send the letter to you; that was about all. Only, I was to watch out to see that you received it."

"Now, look here, Mr. John Smithson, where did you get that note that was brought here by the messenger boy? Who gave it to you, and under what circumstances was it done? You don't mind my asking these questions, do you, Nick?"

"No. Go on."

"Answer me, Smithson."

"Well, sir! I was standing on the other side of Broadway. I suppose I looked sort of aimless—as if I had nothing else to do, which was a fact. A man

came up to me and asked me if I wanted to earn a quarter. I told him I did."

"Well?"

"He handed me the sealed envelope that the boy brought here, and also *two* quarters. He told me to take the letter into the Postal Telegraph Building, and secure a messenger. I was to send the letter to its address, across the street, at the City Hall. I was to say there was no answer."

"Well, there was more to it than that?"

"Yes."

"What more?"

"Just as I was turning away from him to do what he had ordered, he called to me. Then he gave me a second envelope——"

"Where is that one?"

"In my pocket." As Smithson spoke he withdrew the envelope referred to from his pocket, and gave it to the detective, who reached out a hand to take it.

"Go on with what you were saying."

"Then the man gave me a third quarter. It looked good to me; it seemed as if it was raining quarters just then. I hadn't seen a whole one at once in a week."

"Well?"

"He told me, then, that when the boy crossed the park to the City Hall, I was to watch out for his return, and that in about a quarter of an hour afterward, I was to take the other envelope to this office, ask for Lieutenant Kennell, and give it to him. That was all."

"Why did you speak to the boy after he went from here?"

"I just thought I'd ask him if he found you all right."

"The man who gave you the letters did not tell you to speak to the boy?"

"No. That was my own affair. I wished to be sure that I would find Lieutenant Kennell before I came here looking for him. I began to suspect that it was some sort of a joke, and I wasn't sure that I wouldn't get the worst end of it."

"What about that gesture?"

"I have already told you all the reason there was for that, sir. I didn't take much stock in what the man said about it, but I thought it could do no harm to try it on."

"Huh! Well, you can skip out of here, now. It's lucky for you that you didn't get a job breaking stones for the county. Take this as a warning from me: Don't carry mysterious messages again, for anybody. It isn't safe. Skip now." The lieutenant watched the man through the door; then he turned to the detective. "Well, what do you think of that?" he asked.

"There isn't much to it that is worth thinking about, Billy," replied the detective.

"What does it all mean, anyhow? What is Castor trying to do?"

"He is merely making an effort to bother you, that's all."

"Well, he is succeeding, all right, for he is bothering me mightily. I'd give a cold ten-dollar bill to get my dukes onto him, right now."

"I haven't a doubt of it," replied Nick, laughing. "I came down here, Billy, for the express purpose of telling you that he had escaped, and to warn you to keep a sharp eye out for him. That was all. There is only one thing about this whole affair which troubles me: How did Castor manage to get that first note to you? The one you found on the breakfast table."

"Give it up."

"Did you inquire particularly about it?"

"Sure thing."

"And nobody knew a thing about it?"

"No. Hold on, though. There is one circumstance that I had forgotten."

"What is that?"

"A friend of mine—Dan Clifton—stopped at the house this morning to leave word for me about a personal matter. I wasn't downstairs yet. He came to the basement door, and possibly stepped into the dining room while he was there. It is possible that he left the note. Nobody in the house knew a thing about it. Wait a minute. I can get Dan on the phone."

While the lieutenant talked over the wire with his friend Clifton, Nick strolled to the opposite side of the office, and presently Kennell followed him.

"Say," he said, "that was dead easy. It happened in the most natural manner possible. Dan says that just before he entered the house, by the basement door, he met a man on the street, in front of it, who asked him if he was going inside, and if he wouldn't leave a note there for me. Dan says he thought nothing about it. He received the note, and while he was inside the house slipped it under my plate, and thought no more about it. It beats all how dead easy things can be explained sometimes, doesn't it?"

"I am glad that this one is explained," said Nick. "It bothered me."

"Well, it needn't bother either of us any more. But things look to me, Nick, as if we had all our work to do over again."

"That is about the size of it."

"It's too bad they couldn't hold Castor when they had him. What are you going to do now to get hold of him again?"

"I don't know, Billy. It is one of the things a fellow never can know in advance. There are cases with clues to work upon and there are cases that have no clues to offer, at all. This belongs to one of the latter class. My only idea in coming here was to give you the necessary warning to watch out for the appearance of Castor at this office. We must not forget the man inside."

"I should say not."

"I don't apprehend any difficulty at all in that quarter. I don't think that Castor, at the present moment, has any designs upon any particular person, save only you and me. But he has got it in for us, all right, and it looks as if he intended to strike at you, first."

"Gee! I only wish he would. I'd like a chance to take a fall out of him. Nothing he could think of would suit me better than that."

"You want to look out for beetles, Billy."

"Eh? Say! I had forgotten all about that beetle act of his. I had forgotten about his poisoned beetles."*

"Didn't it occur to you that there might have been one of them inside of any one, or of all, of the letters that have been sent to you to-day?"

"No; I'm blowed if it did."

"It was why I wouldn't let you open that last one, Billy."

"But, say, if he was going to put a poisoned beetle into a letter for me, why didn't he put it into the first one?"

"Nobody but Castor could reply to that question; but the probability is that he supposed you would be on your guard. He sent the letters, thinking that you were so. The last letter he sent to you, which the messenger boy carried away with him, may or may not have contained one of Castor's instruments of death."

"Gee! That boy might open it."

"No danger of that. I thought of that before I let him take it away with him. The letter was addressed to you. The boy found you. The company will not hold it. When the boy returns to the office with it, they will send him, or another messenger, back here with it. They won't open it at the office, and they won't hold it, either. I was right, Billy. There comes the same boy, now. Well, young man, what is it this time?"

"Here's your letter, sir," replied the messenger, but addressing the lieutenant, and at the same time extending the envelope toward him. "They told me over at the office to bring it back here, and to leave it on your desk, or drop it on the floor, if you would not receive it. But, maybe, you'll take it, now."

"Yes, I'll take it," replied the lieutenant. "Thank you for bringing it back; and here is an extra dime for you. Gee! Nick, I'm glad to have that envelope back again. I was worrried about it. And, say, there is something inside of it, that bulges. I didn't notice it before. What do you say? Shall we open it?"

"Yes. I think we had better do so."

"And—suppose one of the deadly beetles is inside of it—eh?"

"We'll have to dodge it, that's all."

*See case No. 59, "A Dangerous Man."

CHAPTER IV.

THE NEXT APPEARANCE OF CASTOR.

Lionel Castor, maniac, an inheritor of criminal instincts, many times a murderer, a graduate of three colleges, gifted, talented, a modern Cagliostro, and in some respects almost an incarnate fiend, had, with the aid of his knowledge of science—and particularly of toxicology—succeeded in distilling from the venom of a small green snake which inhabits the regions of the upper waters of the Orinoco River, in Brazil, a poison so deadly that the mere touch of it to certain portions of the human body would produce death.

The poison is not unknown, although it is by no means a familiar one; nor is it generally understood.

The green snake from which the venom is extracted is so small as not to deserve the title of snake; worm would be rather more appropriate. It infests the marshy and insufferably hot bottoms of the tributaries of the upper Orinoco; it is colored like the verdure near it; it hangs, suspended, from the twigs and branches, and will bite whosoever chances to rub against it in passing.

The natives call this small reptile "la muerta de la alma;" which, being translated, means "the death of the soul." It is a significant term, and seems not to be misapplied, because the poison of it is so deadly that the natives are convinced that there exists no future state for its victims.

The career of Castor had been a remarkable one. Well-born, raised in opulence, he had early started

upon a career of crime which had never been entirely checked; and finally, when he was about cornered by the police of Paris, he had supplied still another victim of his arts, and in doing so had selected a man not unlike himself; and then he had succeeded in making the Parisian authorities believe that the body was his own, and that he had committed suicide.

He had discovered that there is a certain kind of beetle which is impervious to the poison he had made such deadly use of, and his method was to spread the poison upon the beetle with a soft feather. After that he would manage to introduce the beetle into the pocket of an intended victim, or to drop it down his neck, or in some such way to bring the small bug into direct contact with the person it was destined to destroy.

The consequence would be that when the beetle found itself confined, and afterward probably disturbed, it became angry.

Its bite, harmless of itself, became deadly because through the wound so created the poison on the little creature found its way into the blood of the victim. A stupor was the almost instant result, and this was followed in a very few minutes by death.

So we have, in a word, Castor's method, as discovered by Nick Carter; and therefore we know what the contents of the envelopes probably were.

"It is a mighty fortunate thing that the letters sent to you earlier in the day did not contain the deadly poison," said the detective, as he and the lieutenant steadily regarded the two envelopes; for it will be remembered that Nick had received the last of them, the one that John Smithson had carried in his pocket to deliver later.

Each of these envelopes bulged a trifle, as if there were something inside of the size and shape of a small beetle.

"How shall we open them?" asked the lieutenant.

"A basin of water would be about the proper thing," replied the detective. "Come into the lavatory; bring your shears. We will cut off the ends of the envelopes and see what the contents are."

With one of the basins filled half full of water, the ends of the two envelopes were cut off, the receptacles were turned upside down, and then from each one there fell into the water—two small beetles; not one from each envelope, but two from each one.

They were much too deadly in their nature to touch, and the detective pulled the plug from the bottom of the basin, and permitted them to disappear through the pipes toward the sewer; then he touched a lighted match to the envelopes and the paper that had contained them, and watched them while they were consumed.

"That fixes all that, Billy," he said, turning away.

"I was wondering if it wouldn't have been a good idea to have saved them," suggested the lieutenant.

"What for? To have them get away from us and kill somebody? No; I think not. They are better and much safer where they are; and it was unnecessary to save them, for I already know all about the poison."

"Isn't there an antidote for it?"

"No; there is no known antidote."

"Gee! That chap meant to get me, all right, didn't he?"

"He certainly did. The only remarkable thing about it to me is that he did not include the deadly insects in the first of the envelopes. Don't forget another time, Billy. If you get any more of those things, open them as we opened those."

"You bet your life I will!"

"I have an idea, William, that Castor is about out of his supply of poison. I don't think he has much more, if any, of it in his possession."

"Why do you think that?"

"Because of the caution he has used in sending those last beetles. If we look at the incident from his point of view, I think we find an explanation for his present acts."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, if he had only a small supply of the poison, he would naturally wish to make the best use of it, from his viewpoint."

"Huh!" said Billy, smiling grimly. "Much obliged, I'm sure. You think that to get *me* would be the best use of it, eh?"

"I think that *he* thought so; to get you and me. But following out the line of reasoning I started upon—if I am at all correct in the surmise—Castor probably had only enough of the poison left to fix up a very few of the beetles. He did not put the little creatures in the first letters he sent to you for the reason that he feared you would be on your guard, and that you would hesitate to open them: but he did figure out that after you had opened several of the envelopes and had found them to be harmless, you would not hesitate in attacking these last ones. That is how he thought he would get you; by first throwing you off your guard."

"I think he would have succeeded, too, if you hadn't blown in, Nick."

"No, I don't. If I hadn't been here, you would

have thought of all these things, just the same as I thought of them."

"Perhaps."

"This whole thing delights me, Billy."

"I'm glad it does. I can't say that it affects me in just that manner."

"I mean that I am pleased to think that Castor is running out of the poison."

"Oh."

"Doubtless he has saved some of the poison—for me. But, as a matter of fact, I don't believe he has much of it left; and that means that the general run of humanity is safe from him for the present. And I don't believe that he can secure more of the deadly stuff, unless he goes to South America after it."

"Then he'll have to try another means of doing his killings."

"Precisely."

"Gee, Nick! I'd like to have a few days of liberty to help you run that fellow down."

"I wish you had. But your place is here. The 'Prince,' as you call him, couldn't spare you; and he wouldn't if he could. So long, Billy. I've got to skip out of this."

"Going? When'll I hear from you again?"

"Probably when you least expect to do so. I'll blow in before long. In the meantime, I must bestir myself in this hunt for Castor. I confess that I don't know where to look first—that I haven't the slightest idea about it."

When the detective left the City Hall he stood upon the front steps for a moment, looking about him. The day was a beautiful one. The very atmosphere suggested peace and harmony. It had no suggestion of crime and criminals.

Across the plaza in front of the City Hall steps Nick's gaze rested upon the figure of a man who was talking to a newsboy who had a bundle of papers under one arm.

The detective saw them both, without interest, but for some unknown reason he kept his gaze fixed upon them, nevertheless; and, while he did so, he saw the boy turn quickly in his own direction, with a sort of comprehensive glance which instantly riveted the detective's attention.

At the same time, the man who had been talking with the boy straightened up and started onward across the park toward the post office; and the boy, after pocketing something that the man had given to him, turned toward Nick, running.

At once the idea flashed upon the detective that he had happened upon an incident that he had eagerly longed for; that the man was Castor, and the boy was another messenger who had been selected for the delivery of still another letter.

Nick Carter started forward rapidly. He managed to meet the boy halfway on the plaza.

"Are you Nick Carter?" the boy gasped as they met.

"Yes, sonny," replied the detective, without taking his eyes from the form of the man he was now intent upon following; and still, without looking down at the boy, he passed a quarter to him and received the sealed envelope.

He knew by the feeling of it between his fingers that the envelope was sealed, and that was the only thing he cared about just then. He did not even look at the boy; he kept his gaze riveted upon the man who had given the note to the lad to be delivered—the man who was now darting across the space that is reserved for mail wagons.

It was Castor, and we will call him so, although Nick was as yet only reasonably certain of that fact.

And Castor did not once look behind him as he sped onward, intent only upon avoiding the eyes of the detective.

But Nick Carter quickly figured out what Castor would do—if indeed it were Castor.

"It is a safe proposition in a case of this kind to put yourself in the other fellow's place," was his thought. "If I were Castor, and was trying to escape Nick Carter, I'd use the post office for it. I'd enter the first door on the Park Row side, and I'd go all the way around to the Broadway side before I emerged."

He was on the point of changing his direction, to approach the Broadway side of the post office, when he heard a small voice beside him exclaim:

"I see him, Mr. Carter. There he goes!"

It was the small newsboy, with the papers still tucked beneath his arm. After receiving the quarter and delivering the envelope he had tagged after the detective, for the mere mention of the name Nick Carter was like a breath of magic to the gamin. He wanted to see more of the man about whom he had heard so much.

"Good!" said Nick in reply. "Good, Johnnie."

"My name ain't Johnnie. It's Pete."

"All right, Pete. That's a good name, too. There goes the man now, around the corner of the building. Do you think you could tag after him without his knowing it?"

"Sure."

The little lad didn't wait for further instructions,

but started ahead on a run, and his small legs carried him swiftly after Castor. Nick turned leisurely in the opposite direction.

He felt so certain that Castor would go around, inside of the building, that he made his own way at once to that entrance which is almost opposite Park Place, and waited there.

Nor had he long to wait—nor was he in any way prepared for the surprise that came to him as a result of waiting.

CHAPTER V.

THE PAPER TRAIL.

Nick waited perhaps two or three minutes longer than he expected he would have to do before Castor appeared, and then he was apprised of it only by a tugging at his sleeve, and, upon looking down, discovered the boy Pete at his side.

"That's him," said Pete, pointing toward a man who was even then in the act of crossing Broadway toward Park Place. "He came out o' the next door —an' he changed his hat an' put on the whiskers while he was passing through the post office. I saw him do it."

It was a fact that Castor had effected one of his quick changes, which were in every way as clever as any that the detective ever did himself.

During the interval, while Castor was passing from the Park Row side of the post office to the Broadway side, he had put away the soft, pearl-colored hat he had worn, and had substituted in its place a black one of the same pattern. He had slipped on a wig of differently colored hair, and had added a beard and a mustache to them, so that for a time, at least, he could pass for an entirely different individual than the one he had appeared to be while he was in the City Hall Park.

It is true that a close observer would have noticed the falseness of his appearance at once; but men along Broadway are not close observers; they haven't time; and doubtless all that Castor desired was to wear the outward disguise long enough to escape from the immediate vicinity of the detective.

Nick started forward instantly.

But Castor, in that interval, slight as it was, had found an opening between the vehicles on the great thoroughfare, and now he darted between them, reaching the curb on the opposite side before Nick Carter had even found an opportunity to follow.

Then the detective saw his man turn the corner into Park Place, and disappear.

He turned to speak to the boy again, but discovered that the lad had also disappeared; and then he saw him, at the risk of his life, almost, darting among the moving throng of trucks, drays, cars, etc., and he knew that the lad was still hot upon the trail.

"That is a smart kid," was the mental comment of the detective as he started through an opening which offered itself at that moment.

But the time that had elapsed, slight though it was, had been sufficient to give Castor the opportunity he wanted; and he had made good use of it.

When Nick Carter reached the Park Place side of Broadway, and turned toward the elevated station of the Sixth Avenue road, man and boy had both disappeared.

Did you ever try to discover how much distance you can cover in one minute of time? Try it sometime, and you will realize how easy it was for Castor to make himself scarce in that short interval when traffic blocked the pursuit of the detective.

In the meantime Nick was moving rapidly forward, however.

He felt assured that the boy would not lose the trail; at least, not at once.

The lad had succeeded in crossing the much-traveled thoroughfare much more quickly than Nick could do it, because his small body slipped through spaces impossible to the detective.

Nick argued that the elevated road would be the natural destination of the man—or one of the surface cars beneath it, and he hurried onward.

Halfway down the block toward the station he was met by another boy, who handed him a piece of torn paper—a part of the title page of an *Evening World*.

"Do you know Pete?" asked the lad.

"Yes," replied the detective, accepting the bit of torn paper, which, however, contained no message of any sort.

"Well, this is for you, mister."

"What is it for?" asked Nick, amazed at Pete's sagacity, which was now developing.

"Pete said he didn't have no time to write, and couldn't do it if he did have time. But he's got a bundle uh *Woilds* wid him, and he said he was goin' to tear off pieces of 'em and leave 'em around wherever he had a chance till you caught up wid him. See?"

"Yes. Thank you."

"An' he told me to tell you that jest now he's gone up on the El station."

"Here is some extra change for you, boy."

"Thankee. And that ain't all, mister."

"What more?"

"He said to tell yuh to stand on the platform o' the train yuh ride on; an' to take that platform nearest ter the gateman at each station. Ketch on?"

"Yes."

"An' he said that when he got off ther train he took, he'd give the gateman the tip, an' that if you'd call out ter each gateman as yuh passed him, bimeby one of 'em would give yuh the news yuh wanted. See?"

"Yes, again."

"An' he said he'd promise the gateman that gave yuh the tip that yuh'd give him half a dollar for it when yuh got it. And that ain't all, neither."

"What more, my lad."

"Well, Pete said yuh'd better call out to each gateman as yuh passed a station, an' wave that 'ere piece o' paper at them. Then the right un'd know enough ter wave ter yuh to get off at the right place. That's all."

Nick Carter hurried onward then, and ascended the stairs to the station. He was more than ever amazed at the sagacity of the lad he had found—or, rather, whom Castor had discovered for him.

"It is worthy of what Chick was when he was a boy," he mused as he boarded a train, not doubting that Castor, with the boy at his heels, was on the train ahead of him.

"It is the first time," he said to himself smilingly, "that I have ever been led by a boy."

He took a position on the platform in the middle of the train, as Pete had directed. At Chambers Street he called out to the gateman, and received a stony and superior stare by way of reply.

This procedure was repeated at Franklin Street, at Grand, at Bleecker, at Eighth, Fourteenth, Eighteenth, Twenty-third—and Nick was beginning to fear that Pete had somehow missed his calculations.

But at the Twenty-eighth Street Station the gateman beckoned wildly to him when he called out, and Nick left the train. Then he waited until the passengers from that train had departed, when he approached the gateman.

"A boy named Pete left a message with you for me," he said. "What was it?"

"Did you come from Park Place Station?" was the reply.

"Yes."

"The boy had a bundle of papers under one arm. He said he would tear them up into little bits, as long as they lasted, and drop the pieces along the street for you to follow. The wind ain't blowing much, and he thought you could follow them."

"I think I can."

"The boy said something more, too."

"Was it something about half a dollar?" asked Nick, smiling.

"It was."

"Here it is—and thank you besides."

Nick descended to the street by the downtown side of the station, because there were little particles of paper which led him in that direction. At the foot of the stairs they directed him toward Sixth Avenue, and thence around the corner toward Twenty-seventh Street.

Pete had evidently been diligent in his preparation of the torn bits of paper while he walked along after the man he was following.

Here and there, on the sidewalk, Nick found a handful of them; then there would be a considerable space where there were none at all; but, by looking ahead, Nick could inevitably see where another handful had been dropped.

In this manner he was led to the corner of Twenty-seventh Street, then across the avenue to Twenty-sixth Street, and through it to Seventh Avenue.

Ahead of him he could see no sign of the man or the boy, save only the torn scraps of paper which were everywhere in evidence.

At some places along the route, a current of air had taken them up and scattered them, but always Nick was enabled to get the general direction.

At Seventh Avenue their route was northward again, and so, many blocks were traversed, and the avenue was crossed three times.

The torn papers led the detective at last to the entrance of a second-hand clothing shop, and then, as Nick quickly discovered, the trail was doubled upon. It went southward for a few blocks, and then turned through to Eighth Avenue, and finally stopped entirely, before the entrance to a pawnshop.

Nick gazed about him carefully, but could see no sign that the papers led away from that place again. It was very evident that Pete had gone no farther than that, or that his paper had given out—and Nick did not accept this latter view, because of the supply he knew the boy to have had.

He looked around him, expecting to discover Pete somewhere about, but there was no sign of the newsboy anywhere.

The detective hesitated to enter the pawnshop just then, fearing that by so doing he might spoil all that Pete had accomplished. He was not in disguise. Castor would recognize him instantly if he were seen; and yet—he could not leave things in the air as they were just then.

"Where is the boy?" he asked himself, as he still hesitated; but there was no reply forthcoming to the question. The boy was not in evidence—so Nick decided very quickly what he would do.

He happened to be carrying in his pocket at that time a folded sheet of tissue paper in which were wrapped three unset diamonds. He selected one of them, returned the paper to his pocket, but with the selected diamond, a small one, in his hand, entered the pawnshop and approached the counter.

A man stepped toward him, and Nick laid the stone on the counter.

"I want twenty dollars," he said, knowing that the diamond was worth more than twice that amount.

"Vait," said the Jew; and he took the diamond and disappeared into a rear room.

He was gone but a moment when he returned with it, made out a ticket, and without more words, save to ask Nick to give a name, passed over the twenty dollars, and deposited the diamond on a shelf behind the office screen.

"What did you take that stone into the back room for?" Nick demanded.

"Vot pishness iss dot of yours, hey?" was the reply. "You vas got your money, ain't it? Vot more do you vant? Mebby I sell out, already, and I don't vant to have de new man puttin' up any kicks. Dis iss my busy day; beat it. Ven you vant your diamond pack ag'in, it'll pe ready."

Nick walked out upon the street again, holding the pawn ticket in his hand.

The diamond he had pawned, in order to enter the place without creating suspicion, was one of three he intended presenting to Patsy; it was just a fortunate circumstance that he happened to have them with him at that time.

But he was no nearer a solution of his problem than before.

Where was Castor, and what had become of the boy, Pete?

The fragments of paper had led the detective to the door of that pawnshop and had gone no farther; but inside the shop there was not the slightest evidence that the boy had entered. Where, then, was he?

The detective looked up and down the avenue for a sign of the lad—and he saw, coming toward him, a different person altogether, but one whom he was not less glad to see at that moment.

CHAPTER VI.

JIMMY BLAKE, THE "SQUARE" CROOK.

The person who approached Nick Carter at that moment was a crook; moreover, a crook whom the detective had twice sent to prison—and the recognition was mutual.

The denizen of the underworld, seeing the dreaded detective so near him, turned, and would have fled at once, merely as a matter of habit, doubtless, had not Nick called out to him.

"Wait, Jimmy!" he called. "There is no use running. I don't want to spoil your liberty. I'm not looking for you—but I do want to talk to you."

Jimmy Blake, a man of many *aliases*, but known best to the police by that one, stopped in his tracks and awaited the approach of the detective.

"I'm not on any lay just now, Carter," he said, in a surly tone. "What are you holding me up for?"

"I'm not holding you up, Jimmy. I want a chat with you."

"Huh! A chat! I know what that means."

"Do you? What do you think it means in this particular instance?"

"You are looking for information that you think I can give you. But you ought to know me well enough, Carter, to know that I never peach on a pal."

"I know that about you, Jimmy. It's the best point you've got about you; but when did you ever hear that Nick Carter tried to make any gun like you peach on a pal? Eh? That isn't my way of doing business, and you know it."

"That's so, all right. But, say, Carter, on the level, don't keep me standing here. It's too bloomin' public for me. This neighborhood ain't good for my health. There ain't nothing particular against me just now, but Leary, and all the rest of the cops, for that matter, prefer my room to my company. If you want to talk with me, let's get inside of something."

"Very well."

"There's a place across the street. How'll that suit you, Nick?"

"All right."

So they crossed the avenue to the saloon, and entered it. Fortunately there was a table near the front window, and Nick could see from the chair he took

beside it, past the curtains, and across the street to the entrance of the pawnshop on the opposite side.

"Order whatever you want, Jimmy; I'll pay for it," said Nick. "I'll smoke a cigar myself; and I'll smoke my own, too. Here, have one."

He tossed a cigar upon the table between them as he spoke, which Blake proceeded to set alight, remarking as he did so, and while he rapped on the table for the drink he wanted:

"Oh, I can pay for it. I'm not broke. I'll drink at my own expense, thank you, all the same. You wouldn't drink with me because I'm a crook; and I wouldn't drink with you——"

"For the same reason; eh, Jimmy?"

"I guess you're right about that, when all's said."

"You were always a queer chap, Jimmy. You're as proud, in some ways, as if you were a duke in disguise. You are an educated man—and by instinct and training a gentleman. I could never understand why you are a crook."

"Did you bring me in here to preach to me, Carter?"

"No; I didn't."

"Then cut it out."

"Oh, all right."

"I am what I am, and it isn't anybody's business. I live my own life, and when I run into the net of the law, I'm willing to take my medicine without whining about it."

"I know all that, Jimmy."

"Now, what did you want with me? I haven't got much time to fool away around here—notwithstanding the fact that I *do* like to talk with you, Carter."

"I expect there is more truth than you intended in that remark, Jimmy."

"That's a fact, there is. I *do* like to talk with you, Carter; but, all the same, I'd as soon meet the devil himself as to meet you."

"Why, Jimmy?"

"Because you always manage to make me regret that I am what I am."

"Well, then——"

"Cut it out, Carter. I insist. What did you want with me?"

"Do you know the Jew who keeps that fence over there?"

"Who told you it was a fence?"

"I just told you so, Jimmy. Do you know the man that keeps the place?"

"Isaacs?"

"I believe that is his name—yes."

"I have a speaking acquaintance with him. But I'm not going to tell you anything that will give him away. He isn't any friend of mine, but I'm not in the peach trade, Carter."

"Oh, I know that. When I ask questions, you can answer them or not, as you please. If you don't answer, I won't press you. Now, do you know Isaacs?"

"Yes."

"Did you know that he had sold out?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"To-day. I was in there when it happened; or, at least, right after it happened. It was early to-day. I guess there can be no harm in telling you that much."

"Who bought him out?"

"I don't know."

"Didn't you see the man?"

"Yes."

"But didn't know him?"

"No. I didn't like his looks, either. He's too swell for that business."

"Swell? What do you mean?"

"Just what I said."

"Isn't he also a Jew?"

"I don't know. He might be one. His name wasn't told me. The place is going to continue under the present name. That was part of the agreement."

"What kind of looking man is he?"

"Hump on his shoulder; cross-eyed; red-headed."

"You're lying to me now, Jimmy, and you mean me to know that you are. But it doesn't matter. You merely wish to give me to understand that you are not giving out information that doesn't concern you."

"Correct. It isn't any of my business, and—neither is it yours."

"All the same, Jimmy, there is just one question that I would like to have you answer, if you will do so."

"I'll tell you when I hear what it is."

"Very well; watch me now. I want you to tell me if you saw that man who bought out Isaacs make this gesture. Did you?"

As Nick asked the question he brought one hand to his chin, and held it there, with the chin between the thumb and crooked forefinger.

"Did you see the man make this gesture?" he repeated.

Jimmy slowly closed one eye, in an expressive wink.

"It is very clever of you, Carter," he said, "but I'm not telling things. I suppose he'd perch on me in a minute—but I wouldn't do it on him, not for anything."

"Never mind, Jimmy. You have replied to the question."

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"If you had *not* seen the gesture, you would have told me so at once. As it is, I suppose you have seen it; anyhow, I shall take it that way."

"Take it as you like; I don't care."

The detective was silent for a time; then he said, as if it were a sudden thought—but the reader, aware of Nick Carter's methods of doing things, will understand that there was a definite purpose in the detective's mind when he spoke:

"I thought you intimated a moment ago that you are flush, Jimmy."

"I did. Are you broke? Want to borrow a stake?"

"No, thank you. I believe you *would* stake me if I wanted it."

"I certainly would. I've got nothing against you, Carter. You have sent me away twice, but it was strictly in the line of your duty both times. Why did you care to know about my being flush?"

"Well, I have known you always as a swell dresser when you had the dough. You look rather shabby, and not up to the fashion-plate figure you usually cut when the bank roll is big."

Jimmy Blake laughed for the first time.

"You're a dandy, Carter," he said, still smiling. "You're right, too. The fact is, I was on my way to get my new rags when I met you. Then I'm going to light out for a time. You won't see me around here right away again."

"No?"

"That was principally why I wanted to avoid you. You won't do anything to prevent me going, will you?"

"Not a thing, Jimmy."

"I'm on an honest lay this time, too."

"Then I'll help you to go if you need help."

"I don't; thank you all the same. But if you've got all the information you want out of me, I'll mosey along."

"Traveling light, Jimmy?"

"Yes; confound it! Say, Carter, the fact is I've got an old mother out West. She doesn't know what business I have been in, and I don't mean that she shall. She has sent for me, and I'm due to go and see her. I've got two rooms over on the East Side of the city, but the cops are keeping watch of the place since I have been there, and I'm so dead leary lest they'll do something to keep me from going where I want to, that I'm just leaving everything as it is. I'm going to dress where I bought the new rags, and then beat it for the train; and then it's good-by to Jimmy Blake, for a time, at least."

Deliberately the detective took one of his own cards from his pocket and scribbled something on the back of it with a fountain pen. Then he passed it to Jimmy.

"Take this with you; it may help you if you are held up on the way," he said.

It was dated and written in ink. It read:

"To any member of the New York Police Force.

"The bearer, Jimmy Blake, is going out of town on legitimate business. He has given his word to be good, and not to offend the law, for thirty days from the above date. Let him go where he will within that time. I will be responsible for the keeping of his promise. NICK CARTER."

The crook read the words twice before he spoke again. Then, with a suspicious huskiness in his voice, he said:

"Carter, I don't just know how to thank you. It is mighty good of you. You needn't be at all afraid that I won't live up to this, because I will. Now, is there anything that I can do for you that won't be against my principles about giving others away?"

"Yes; there is just one thing, Jimmy."

"What is it?"

"I want that old suit of clothes you are wearing now. I want, also, to borrow your identity, for a time, if you will lend it to me. I won't dishonor it, I think."

"I don't just understand you, Carter."

"You are going to take the first train out of town, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, we are about the same build. Our features are enough alike so that I won't have any very great difficulty in making up to look like you."

"Oh; I see. I have heard that you can do that sort of thing."

"Would you like to see me do it?"

"Yes; only wait a minute."

"Well?"

"You intend to appear on the streets of New York, and elsewhere, as Jimmy Blake?"

"That's the idea."

"Will you, in return for what I will do, promise me that you won't do anything to spoil the reputation I have earned in the underworld of being on the level among my own class?"

"I will."

"You are on some big lay, eh?"

"I am after one of the worst criminals alive to-day. He is a murderer for the mere lust of killing. He is not on the level with anybody, not even himself. You don't know the man, and never did know him. He is not in your line at all. He is rich, and doesn't have to steal. He just kills—and usually he kills women, at that."

"Huh! Well! You can make all the use of Jimmy Blake you want to, to catch a guy like that fellow. I'd like to stay here and help you. Come on, if you want my togs. You shall have them, and welcome."

"Where is the place, Jimmy?"

"On the next block; this side of the street."

"All right. We'll walk down there together. I suppose it's a swell suit that you have swiped somewhere; eh, Jimmy?"

"I've been having them done over to fit me a bit better," was the droll reply, given without heed to the question. "Come along."

When they entered the store on the next block, Nick posted himself at the window, from which he could still keep the pawnshop window in view; and he remained at his post until Blake had changed his clothes.

"Now, Jimmy," he said, "have those old clothes wrapped in a bundle. We'll take them back to that saloon on the corner above. There are rooms over it, and possibly we can get the use of one of the front ones for half an hour. That will be all the time I need. I will want you with me while I fix myself up; after that you can skiddoo for a train as soon as you like."

Blake carried the bundle, although Nick offered to do so.

The two were soon in possession of a front room directly above the saloon, and, after the detective had arranged the curtains so that he would have an unobstructed view of the pawnshop opposite while he worked, he began the process of merging his own identity into that of Jimmy Blake, the square crook, as he was called among the members of his own profession.

And, while he worked, the man of the underworld looked on with ever-increasing amazement.

Occasionally he made some sort of a comment, but for the most part he was silent; only it was plain that he was intensely interested; and then, when the detective had quite finished with his preparations, Blake made a strange and a remarkable proposition.

CHAPTER VII.

A TRADE IN IDENTITIES.

Blake had watched with great care every move the detective made during the alterations in his appearance which transformed him into a perfect representation of the crook.

"It's wonderful," he said. "That mother of mine of whom I just spoke wouldn't know the difference. I don't know how you do it."

"It is an art, Jimmy—just as breaking into a safe is an art. You have mastered that."

"Oh, well, that's different."

"Not so great a difference as you imagine. Every man to his trade, you know."

"Well, say, Carter, I've got an idea."

"What is it?"

"Why, you're me now. What's the matter with my being you for a time?"

"Eh?"

"Didn't I put it plain enough?"

"Yes; but I wasn't sure that you hadn't gone out of your head."

"Not a bit of it."

"Well, what do you propose—and why do you propose it?"

"Look here, Carter, I have sized up this situation about right, to my way of thinking. That fence across the avenue has got something to do with the layout. I shouldn't wonder if that guy who has bought out old Isaacs is the gun you're after."

"Perhaps. I am not sure myself as to that."

"Well, it stands to reason that if he is the cove you're stacking up against, and if he knows who you are, which is more than likely, that you have been piped off ever since we met, a little while ago. Eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, now, you make me up as Nick Carter. You can do it, can't you?"

"As easily as I did this. But why?"

"I'll be as square as Nick Carter as you will be as Jimmy Blake. We'll walk out of this joint together. I'll go my way and you can go yours. I'll go to the train, and you can go wherever you like. We'll part outside on the street. If they *are* piping you off—well, you see the point."

"They will think that it is Jimmy who remains, and that it is Nick Carter who has gone away."

"Precisely. And if any of their outfit takes after me, I won't deceive them, either."

"It isn't a bad idea, Jimmy," said the detective medi-

tatively. Then he smiled, and added: "The only thing I hesitate about is letting you run off with Nick Carter."

"I'll be square with him, Nick."

"I don't doubt that; and, besides, you can't wear the disguise very long. It will soon have to be touched up a bit, and you couldn't do that."

"No. I won't want to do it, either."

"You see——"

"Wait a minute, Nick. If you think that I will do anything to dishonor——"

"You're away off, Jimmy. It isn't that at all that makes me hesitate."

"What is it, then?"

"You will be running into danger, I'm afraid."

"Danger!"

"Just that, Jimmy. There is a man over there, on the opposite side of the avenue, I suspect—or, if he isn't there, he is not very far off—who has sworn to kill me. Now, I don't want you to undertake any unnecessary risks. If Castor is there and——"

"Who?"

"His name is Lionel Castor. He's a——"

"Pardon me again, Carter. Is he the same Castor that so much was said about over on the other side of the pond not so very long ago?"

"Yes."

"Is he the chap you're after?"

"Yes."

"There was a report that he was dead; that he had committed suicide."

"I know, but it was a false report. He is alive. He is in New York. I strongly suspect that he is at this moment over there in Isaacs' fence. I further suspect that he has bought out Isaacs' place, only I can't guess why, unless it is to supply himself with a place of retreat. What do you know about him, Jimmy?"

"Nothing. Not a thing; only I have heard about him. But the mere mention of that chap has always aroused all the worst there is in me. I've a good notion to stay here and see the thing out. But, say, you needn't have any hesitation about letting me use your moniker, just because of what you said just now. I'll take my chances as to that."

"Oh, well, now that you are warned, it will be all right."

"You'll do it?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll travel in style, and as a gentleman, for once more in my life. I'll have the best there is going on my way West, for I won't be dead scared all the time for fear that some cop has wired ahead to have me put off the train, or something of that kind."

"Stand right here, Jimmy, where you can see the door of Isaacs' fence while I fix you up."

"What shall I keep tabs on? What do you want me to watch for?"

"Tell me if old Isaacs comes out, or if any one like him does. Also keep your eye out for a boy that looks like a newsboy."

"All right. Go ahead. I won't let anything get past."

It did not take long for the detective to so change the entire appearance of Jimmy Blake that, instead of looking like himself, he resembled the detective so thoroughly that any one knowing the latter might easily have been mistaken.

"Shall I put on those clothes of yours, too?" asked Jimmy, when the work was finished.

"No. You'll pass muster well enough as you are, with your own new suit on. They are not unlike my discarded ones, which I will wrap into a bundle and leave here to be called for when I want them. I'll send my man after them later. Now, look at yourself in the glass, Jimmy."

"Gee! Who'd have thought it possible?"

"How do you like it?"

"Out of sight. There is some fun in being respectable. Say, I can walk the street now and snap my fingers at the coppers, can't I?"

"Yes; I guess you could do that, all right, if you cared to try it. Only I should advise you not to keep it up very long. I am likely to get back to Nick Carter at any moment."

"You're running a great risk in letting a professional crook have your moniker, Nick."

"I have taken your word, Jimmy. I think you will keep it."

"You bet I will."

"Are you all ready now?" asked Nick. "If you are, we will go outside. I want to get over to Isaacs' place before long, now; as soon as you have gone."

"Gee! I'd like to see the old duffer when he talks with you. Maybe I ought to put you wise to a few things."

"I'll appreciate anything that you care to tell me, Jimmy; but I don't want you to go against that principle of yours."

"Oh, I won't do that. Isaacs knows me, all right; and I know him. Sometimes I have pawned certain things with him without intending ever to redeem

them. I told him they were mine, though; he always insists upon that."

"Of course."

"I received this bunch of money I've got with me now from him. He gave it to me this morning. There are three thousand dollars in the roll; three thousand one hundred and forty-four dollars. I have been figuring it up since I got it, and I find that he stewed me out of two hundred and thirty-six. There ought to have been just three thousand four hundred in the wad. You might tackle him for the balance. That was what I was after when you first saw me. I was going to stop there first, and then go to the clothes shop."

"I'll remember it."

"The stuff I sol—pawned, that is—was shiners, you know; but they came from the other side. It wasn't any swag of my taking, although—well, you know."

"I understand; yes."

"That's your cue."

"All right. I'll remember. And now, Jimmy, I want you to promise me to be careful. I would not like that you should come to an untimely end just because I consented to fix you up to pass for me. Keep the flaps of your side pockets on the outside, so that things can't be dropped into them, and don't open envelopes that are handed to you by unknown persons. You'll be safe as soon as you are out of the city—and, anyhow, you'd better discard that Nick Carter business as soon as you are on the train."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EIGHTH AVENUE "FENCE."

They parted on the curbstone directly in front of the saloon, and Nick stood there a few moments watching the crook as he walked up the avenue toward Forty-second Street, bound, ultimately, for the Grand Central Station.

To another person who might have been standing there, it would have seemed that it was Nick Carter who walked away from that corner, and that it was Jimmy the crook who remained.

Nick smiled as he watched Blake go. The man walked along with his head in the air, for once, at least, convinced that he was safe, and no longer afraid to encounter the glances of watchful policemen who might recognize him.

But the detective had some misgivings in letting Jimmy go in that manner, although he had every reason to suppose that Castor was at that moment inside the pawnshop across the avenue.

Still, that was by no means certain. He had not arrived on the scene soon enough to know positively whether Castor had entered there or not.

He only knew that the particles of paper had ceased at that doorway—that for some reason, as yet unexplained, Pete had stopped dropping them at that place.

Until that moment Nick had supposed that the boy was in hiding somewhere around the near neighborhood, waiting for him to appear, and that he had not seen the detective when he approached the place, or when he moved up and down the avenue in the company of Jimmy Blake.

But now it came to him suddenly that the boy might be inside of the pawnshop all the time; that he might have entered the place in pursuit of the man he was following, and been detained there; for it all came back to the detective, then, that Castor was almost supernaturally sagacious in regard to such things.

There could be but little doubt that the man had noticed the boy following him, and it would be Castor's nature to retaliate for such an offense.

Nick waited until Jimmy had turned a corner up the avenue; then he walked straight across the street and entered the pawnshop.

Isaacs was still behind the counter, and he seemed to be alone in the store.

"Hello, Chimmy!" he said before Nick had an opportunity to speak. "Vot you doin', hey, nosing around the streets mit dot Nick Carter man? Hey?"

"So you was onto us, were you, Dutch?" replied Nick, imitating the voice and manner of Jimmy Blake to perfection.

"Sure I vas onto you. Vy not—hey? Vot you doing mit Nick Carter? Hey?"

"Oh, he's got my moniker, Dutch. I saw him come out uh here, and I thought it best not to try to dodge him."

"No." Dutch Isaacs shook his head like a wiseacre. "It don'd pay to dodge Nick Carter. He is vot you call a vize guy; hey?" The old man chuckled, as if he had said something of unusual wit. Then sharply he added: "Vot you do mit him; eh?"

"Oh, he wanted to pump me, Dutch—about you, too."

"Vot he vant to know about me?"

"He wanted to know if you kept a fence, and——"

"Und you told him—vot?"

"Say, old man, what do you suppose I told him?

Did you ever know Jimmy Blake to give anybody away? Did you ever know Jimmy Blake to squeal?"

"No, Chimmy, I didn't."

"Well, then?"

"Vot did he vant to know about dot fence for; hey?"

"How the blazes should I know what he wanted to know? He didn't think it wise, probably, to put me onto his game; but he's got it in for somebody who has been coming in here, I suppose. Maybe it's that guy you sold out to. Or, say, is that a fake?"

"No; it ain't no fake, Chimmy. I vas sold out, already, all right."

"Sure about that?"

"Yes."

"Then what are you doing there, behind the counter, just as if you still owned the place?"

"I'm running it. I'm vorking for de oder mans now. I'm his manager."

"The devil you are!"

"Sure, Chimmy. Vot you vant now, Chimmy? Have you got some more shiners for me, mebby?"

"No; but I want the balance that you owe me on the others. You owe me two hundred and thirty-six dollars. Pay up."

"Oh, my! oh, my! oh, my! Vill you hear dot now? Vot for you say dot? Hey?"

"I say it because I mean it. You was that much shy in making me the payment. You only gave me three thousand one hundred and forty-four. It should have been——"

"Come off de perch, Chimmy. You vas crazy. Besides, I don't own de place no more; and the boss is—vell, he ain'd out, but he ain't to be seen."

"Dutch, if you don't fork over——"

"Vell, if I don'd fork over—vot?"

"I'll find Nick Carter again, and tell him that you *do* keep a fence."

"Den you told him a lie, 'cause I don'd. Didn't you just hear dot I was sold out already? You vas talking through de roof of your head, Chimmy. Two hundred and thirty-six dollars! Say! Do you suppose old Dutch Isaacs vas made of money?"

"Pretty near it, Dutch. I think it was stirred in rather thickly when you were made. And you look here. I want that two hundred and thirty-six, or I'll——"

"Vell? Vot?"

"I'll break into your place some night and trim it clean."

The old fence keeper shrugged his shoulders and chuckled aloud.

"Go ahead, Chimmy, und trim," he said. "It vas not my goods any more."

"Well, I know where a lot of your own goods are kept, all the same, and don't you think I don't. If you don't pay up, you'll take the consequences. You know me."

"Oh, yes, I vas know you. You rob me, Chimmy, und I squeal on you. I send you up for—let me see—about three terms of ten years each. How vas dot?"

"If you should squeal on Jimmy Blake, old man, he'd cut your throat. Don't make any mistake about that! Say, Dutch!" Nick leaned across the counter and shook his fist in the old man's face, just as he imagined that Jimmy Blake might have done under the circumstances. "Do you think that because you have put up a bluff about selling out that I'm going to be done by you? Not much, I ain't! You got the stuff for less than half what it's worth, anyhow. Fork over, Dutch, or I'll—well, I'll get it out of you, and a lot more with it."

The old man backed away from the detective, never suspecting that it was not Jimmy Blake who threatened him. He was frightened, too. Jimmy had another reputation that he had earned, besides the one of being square; it was of *getting square*.

"Come around next veek, Chimmy, and I'll fix it up," he said apologetically.

"Fix it now, if you want me for a friend instead of an enemy. Gee, but I'm sorry already that I didn't give the hull shooting match away to Nick Carter. I might have done it just as well as not."

"All right. I fix him up for you, right avay—before you go out, Chimmy. But say, who vas Nick Carter looking for, already?"

"A guy named Castor. Know him?"

"Gastor—Gastor——"

"No. I didn't say Gastor-Gastor; nor Vaudeville-Devere; nor Tragedy-Hackett. It ain't no hyphenated name; it's just plain Castor, like you roll a chair on, or take into your stomach when—when you need it. C-a-s-t-o-r, Castor. Do you know him?"

"No; I don'd. Dis ain'd no furniture establishment, or an apothecary shop, neither. Vot do you s'pose? Dot I'm running a horspittel?"

The detective laughed aloud; but he continued the questioning along the same lines. He believed that he could use this interview to advantage before he got through with it.

"You'll be the leading character in a funeral procession the first thing you know, if you don't fork over that money," he said.

"But about that Castor feller; vot of him, Chimmy?"

"The detective says that Castor is a bad egg. He says he's the guy who bought you out. Oh, he knew all about that, all right, all right."

"De guy vot bought my place? Not mooch he ain't. Dot man's name is Heymann."

"That's what he *says*. My name is Mud when I choose to make it so; but that don't alter the case none. Nick Carter says the guy's name is Castor, and he didn't have any call to lie about it."

"I'll ask him about dot," said the Jew solemnly.

"I would if I were you. There is more to it, too."

"More? Vot more, Chimmy?"

"There is a kid in the mix-up, somewhere."

"A vot?"

The expression, uttered carelessly, had told even better than the detective had dared to hope. He saw that Isaacs gave a start, but as quickly controlled himself.

"You heard me, Dutch. I said—*a kid*."

"So you did, Chimmy. Vot is dot? A young goat, ain't it, already? Vell, if a kid is a young goat, vot is a kiddin'? For you are kiddin' me now, ain't you?"

"Aw, what's the matter with you? Nick Carter said that a kid named Pete—a newsy—followed the guy we've been talking about, and that the kid came into this place and ain't gone out again. That's what he said."

"Say, Chimmy!"

"Well?"

"You vas do me a favor? Hey?"

"Mebby. I'll hear what it is first."

"Vell, you go and find Nick Carter, and ven you find him, you tell him for me dot he's a liar; vill you?"

"I'm only telling you what he said. On the level, he didn't like it any too well. He'll make it hot for you, Dutch, if you've been abducting kids. I didn't know before that you could borrow anything on a boy. Take it from me, Isaacs, if you've got a youngster concealed anywhere about the premises, you'd better turn him loose, for I've got a hunch that Carter will be mooning around here after the boy, if he doesn't show up in his usual haunts before long."

"Vere is dot?"

"Where is what?"

"His—vot you call—usual haunts? Vot iss dot? Somethings good to eat, mebby. Say, Chimmy, you make me tired. You vas gif me a pain in de little finger. Beat it out of here. I'm busy, und I ain't got no more time to talk mit you."

"Where's the money?"

"Now, vill you listen to dot! Still talking about dot money! Didn't I tole you dot if you'd come around next month——"

"No; you didn't. You said later; but I want it now. I'll wait in the back room while you count it out for me. Somebody might come in here."

Nick moved forward toward a door at the rear which he had reason to suppose opened upon the living room of the old man, but the latter called to him in an excited tone:

"Here! Vere de plazes you going?"

"Into the back room, I told you."

"I don'd vant you in dere."

"Well, it don't cut any ice whether you do or not; I'm going in, just the same."

Suiting the action to the words, he threw open the door into the adjoining room, and started to pass through the opening; but he paused abruptly on the threshold.

The room was occupied, but not in precisely the manner in which the detective had expected to find it.

CHAPTER IX.

OLD ISAACS' VILE PLOT.

The detective had really thought he would find Castor in that room. He had "been killing time" with the old man, in the belief that Castor was listening to everything that was said, and therefore the purpose of reassuring the waiting criminal.

But Castor was not there. If he had been there at all, he had made his escape from the room after Nick Carter entered the front door of the pawnshop—and the thought that this might be so came to the detective even in that moment of surprise at what he did see.

Pete, the newsboy, was there.

He was settled down deeply into the low seat of an easy-chair, and seemed to be sleeping—or dead. Nick thought that the boy was dead when he first saw him, but a motion of his throat denoted that he was breathing, and so the detective stepped forward, greatly reassured.

The old Jew had followed him into the room, and now he turned upon Isaacs; but he did not forget to keep up the character he had been playing.

"So," he said, "Nick Carter was right about the kid, after all, eh? Say, you old reprobate, what the devil do you mean by——"

"Now, Chimmy, Chimmy. Chimmy; softly, softly, my friend. Dot vas a leetle street boy vot vas tired und

sleepy, und I told him he could sit dere und rest himself. Vot iss wrong about dot, Mister Plake? Hey?"

"Nothing—if you're not lying."

"Vot! Me? Dutch Isaacs lying? Chimmy, vould you insult me already?"

"Well, if the kid is here, Castor is here, too. Where is Castor?"

"I don'd know any Gastor. I told you dot."

"Where is the man who was here, then? The fellow you call Heymann?"

The Jew shrugged his shoulders and turned out the palms of his hands, after the manner of his people when they feel particularly noncommittal.

"Where is the new proprietor of this place?" said Nick.

The Jew did not reply. Indeed, he seemed as greatly puzzled—even more so, in fact—as Nick was. But in the meantime Nick had crossed to the side of the boy, and was now bending over him.

After a moment he straightened up, and, turning upon the Jew, said sharply:

"Look here, Dutch. This kid has been drugged. Who did it?"

Isaacs shrugged his shoulders, threw out his hands, but did not answer.

"Who did it, I say?" repeated Nick, but still taking care to preserve the character he was acting out so perfectly. "Did *you* do it?"

"No. Of course I didn't do it. Dond'd pe foolish, Chimmy."

"Well, then, that guy who bought you out must have done it. Where is he?"

"I don'd know."

"Was he here when you were last in this room?"

"Yes, Chimmy; he vas."

"Where is he now?"

"Mebby he vas dissolved into thin air, Chimmy. I know shust as much about it as you do."

"He has gone out."

"Vell, any fool could see dot."

"Did you see him go out?"

"No, Chimmy, I didn't. I thought he vas in here until you opened dot door, so help me!"

"Look here, I always suspected that you had a——"

"Now, now, now, Chimmy, you needn't suspect nothing at all like dot. De shentlemans—Mr. Heymann—has gone out by de secret door, that you know about as vell as I do. Dot's all dere iss about dot."

The Jew had interrupted Nick just in time. He had been on the point of asking for the secret of a door which was perfectly well known to Jimmy Blake.

Nick's rather cursory examination of Pete had assured him that the boy would be none the worse for the sleeping draught he had been forced to take, though just why it should have been given to the lad at all he could not then determine.

"Chase yourself out through that secret door, and see if you can discover your Mr. Heymann," he ordered. "What did he want to go out for when you were in the store? Why didn't he tell you about it?"

The Jew shrugged his shoulders and dropped upon a convenient chair. Then he tiptoed into the store again, and through it to the front door, where he turned the key, locking it. In another moment he was back again, and with his sliding, half-gliding motion, which took him over the floor with surprising swiftness, he crossed to a seeming wardrobe that stood against the rear wall, and opened the doors.

He leaned inside of it, brushing aside some coats that hung there, and so opened the secret door that had been referred to; and, to Nick's surprise, he disappeared quickly beyond it.

But he was gone only a short time, presently returning and closing the secret door behind him. Then he moved an electric switch that was against the wall.

Then, for the first time since he began those manœuvres, he spoke.

"There!" he said. "He can't get inside without ringing de pell, anyhow. Now, ve can talk, Chimmy."

"Talk! What about? What are you up to, old man?"

"You vant money, don'd you? Dot iss your business, ain't it? You iss a thief, aren't you? Vell, I tol' you somethings vich you put avay down deep in your pipe und smoke it. See?"

"I'm listening. What is it?"

"Dot mans—Heymann, I calls him; you say he iss Gastor, but dot don'd cut no beefsteaks—vell; dot feller iss shust—oh, my! oh, my! oh, my!—he is shust packed mit money! Dere!"

"Say, Dutch, you'd better take something for that trouble of yours; it's going to your head."

"Chimmy, you vas took it from me; vot I tells you iss de truth; t'ousands and t'ousands of tollars—yellowbacks; und t'ousands and t'ousands of Bank of England notes; oh, my! oh, my! To think dot any man can go around de city of New York mit such a vealth on him, und I not know it till now! It iss a disgrace, Chimmy. It iss a disgrace to your profession, und to mine."

"What in the world are you talking about? Have you gone crazy, Dutch?"

"No; but I vill—if I don'd git dot money avay from dot man. Vy, it iss a shame for him to haf to carry all dot money around mit him. Say!"

"Well?"

"Vot you s'pose he pay me for dis place, hey? All in cash; hey?"

"How should I know what he paid you?"

"Sixty t'ousand tollars—say, Chimmy, I ain't got it here. It iss all in de pank. Und, besides, you don'd vant my money; it iss his dot you vant."

"Well?"

"Sixty t'ousand tollars, all in cash; und such purty cash; oh, my! Und say, Chimmy, de place vere he took it from; oh, my! He has his clothes lined mit de stuff. Dot sixty t-ousand dollars vasn't a fleabite to de rest he had mit him. Hey? Vot do you say to that, Chimmy?"

"I say that you're dreaming, Dutch."

"Vell, I ain't dreaming. Dot's no dream, Chimmy. Vot I told you iss de truth. He has got all that money. There must be one, two, three, four hundred t'ousand tollars, all told. Oh, my! Und to think! Chimmy, you get dot money; then ve divide; hey?"

"You're crazy."

"No; it's de truth. I tell you. Money, money, money. Say, Chimmy, it'll be like living on a farm, so it will. You just get yourself behind him somehow, and hit him a smack on de head, and woof! it's all up with Mister Heymann, or Gastor, votever hiss name iss. Und den ve divide. But, say, Chimmy, ven you hit him, you must hit hard, so he vont be waking up no more; und den ve vill put him in de cellar. I got a place down dere, all ready. In two days I can pack up all dis stuff and skip out—now, vot you tink of me for a friend, hey?"

"I think I begin to understand you, now," said Nick. He could barely conceal the disgust he felt at this old scoundrel, who did not even hesitate at the thought of murder for the sake of the money he worshipped. "You want me to murder the man who has bought your place?"

"Vell, murder iss a hard vord. I didn't say dot, you know. I shust vant you to hit him so hard on de head that he vill fall ashleep und won't wake up again. If you like dot word—murder—vy, call it dot. I don'd care."

"I guess you don't. That's a fact. Is that what you were going to do with this kid?"

"Oh; de kid. I don'd care nottings about him. But think of the money. Vill you do vat I say?"

"I'll think about it, Dutch."

"Father Abraham, Chimmy! dere ain't no time to think about it. He may be back at any minute. I fix de bell so it will ring when he comes. He can't get in by de front vay, 'cause I haf lock de door. Ven de bell rings, den ve have shust two full minutes more, till he comes into de room. Vot you say?"

"I'll think about it."

"Oh, my! oh, my! de idea of thinking about it! Do it; dot's de only vay, Chimmy. Think about all that money. One, two, three, maybe four hundred t'ousand tollars. I don't know how much; only I neffer did see so much at one time before as he has got on him. I haf been most vild mit myself since I saw dot money."

"Trying to think out some plan to get it away from him, eh?"

"Yes. Sure. Why not? It iss a shame that he should haf it all."

"And if I hadn't happened in here when I did, and then forced my way into this room, you would have murdered him without me, wouldn't you?"

"Vell, vell, you can't blame me for dot. I didn't think of you in de matter till you did come into this room."

"So that is what you were so busy about, in the store; trying to think up a way to kill that fellow, was it?"

"Sure, Chimmy. I don'd like his looks. He'd do for me, if I didn't vas kill him. But you are so strong, Chimmy. You can do it, easy."

"Maybe it is lucky for you that I came—to save you from being a murderer."

"Yes; dot iss so. Maybe it iss. You vill do it, Chimmy?"

"I am thinking about it."

"Dot iss better. Ve vill divide, hey? You take one-third and I vill take——"

"What's the matter with you, Dutch? Don't I get half?"

"Vell, you see, I supply de opportunity. You don't do nottings but de killing; und dot is so easy for you. Oh, vell, if you insist upon it—but I had a good scheme all vorked out, shust before you came in."

"Did you? What was it?"

"I vas going inside to make some coffee bimeby, und into the coffee I vould haf put some of a leetle powder I haf. It vould put him to sleep, und den, aftervards—— Oh, vell; I don'd know but I am glad you vas come. It safe me all of dot trouble."

"What an old scoundrel you are, Dutch!"

"No, no, Chimmy. But dot money! Oh, my! oh, my!"

But, as the old man uttered that last expressive exclamation he was so fond of, he started to his feet, for at that instant the electric bell, where he had turned on the switch, began its clattering ringing.

"He iss here, Chimmy. In two minutes he will valk into dis room. My, my! It iss your only chance. *Vot vil you do?*" Isaacs gasped in his excitement.

But Nick Carter was already half way across the room toward some heavy curtains that hung there.

"Get into the store, Isaacs," he ordered. "I'll hide here. Afterward, we will see—what we will see. Quick, now. The man is coming. Let me advise you not to call him Castor, if you should speak to him."

CHAPTER X.

THE RETURN OF CASTOR.

When Nick Carter stepped behind the curtains referred to, he found that he was inside a small alcove, from which there was a communicating door with some room beyond it.

Making use of the short interval that must intervene before the approaching Castor could enter the room he had just vacated, Nick opened the door referred to and discovered a small, closet-like room, which bore every evidence of being the sleeping place of the old Jew; and so, leaving the door just a very little bit ajar, Nick remained where he was instead of waiting directly behind the curtains, as he had intended doing.

In this he was fortunate, for one of the first things that Castor did on entering the room back of the pawnshop was to pull aside the curtains and peer behind them. If the detective had remained there, he must have been discovered.

As it was, Castor seemed satisfied, for he returned to the room behind the shop, and Nick heard him drop upon a chair with a sigh of relief, as if he had been hurrying.

To appear before Castor in the guise he wore then would have been of no avail to the detective, for it would mean nothing whatever to the murderer; and so Nick used the opportunity thus afforded him by rapidly doing away with all the outward appearances of the crook whose identity he had so successfully utilized, and in resuming his own proper appearance of Nick Carter; only the clothing of Jimmy Blake remained when he had finished. In all other respects Nick Carter had returned to his own.

But the character of Jimmy Blake had accomplished its purpose. It had successfully deceived Dutch Isaacs and had brought the detective into contact with the man he sought. Now it was time for Nick Carter to reappear—and he did.

He smiled to himself as he thought of the astonishment and dismay of the Jew when he should discover that he had been confiding in the detective himself, and not to "Chimmy," as he had so fondly hoped.

It was a question in Nick's mind if he would not have done quite as well to leave affairs as they had been, and let the old Jew kill the man, for Castor would then have been well out of the way for all time; but it was the detective's province to prevent the commission of crime wherever possible, and so it was doubtless better that he had arrived on the scene in time.

Besides, it was by no means certain that the Jew would have been successful in his designs. Castor had many times proven himself to be a difficult person to get the best of, and the affair might have ended, and doubtless would have done so, in the death of the Jew, instead of Castor.

When Nick had washed the paint from his face, and had otherwise restored his appearance, so that Castor would instantly recognize him as Nick Carter, he stepped again into the space behind the curtains, and presently peered through into the room occupied by the man he was trailing.

It was the first time the detective had ever seen Castor when the latter believed himself to be utterly alone and unobserved, and it afforded Nick a revelation which he had not expected.

All the outward appearance of a man of sound and reasoning mind had disappeared, and instead there was revealed—a madman.

There was no occasion at that time for the exercise of insane cunning, so far as appearances went; there was no person present with the crazed man whom it was necessary that he should deceive; there were no eyes watching him, as he thought; there was no brain present that was even more keen than his own; and so the mask he habitually wore was thrown aside, and Castor showed up for what he was—an insane person.

He was seated upon a chair beside the centre table; he was bending slightly forward, with his elbows resting upon his knees, and his eyes fixed upon the door which communicated with the pawnshop, and beyond which Nick had no doubt the old Jew was at that moment bending all his energies toward listening to what might happen in that back room.

After a moment, Castor arose slowly from the chair, and moved swiftly toward the door.

Nick's first thought was that he was going into the shop to attack Isaacs—to murder him—but an instant more satisfied him that he was wrong in that conjecture, for Castor merely turned the key in the lock; but he did it so softly and silently that it was doubtful if the Jew heard him.

Then he resumed his chair, and also the attitude he had formerly taken.

For a considerable time after that he sat very still, and Nick could see that the man was making a visible effort to collect his thoughts; he was undergoing a struggle to hold his reasoning powers in subjection.

The detective realized for the first time something of the portentous magnitude of the struggles which persons so afflicted are obliged to undergo, to hold within themselves the power to deceive others as to their own true condition.

Here, before the detective's eyes, was revealed the crazy man, who, believing himself to be utterly alone, could rest his weary will-power, and could give his features full play to express the savage propensities which chased one another through his crazed and afflicted mentality.

Castor was himself rather handsome than otherwise; but now his face became almost hideous in the many distortions it underwent.

The eyes glared; the teeth clinched and gritted together; the lips were drawn backward from the teeth, in a hideous grin, like that of a snarling and mad-

dened dog; the brows were corrugated and swollen; the nostrils were dilated; the hair on his head seemed half to stand upright, as with one who is badly frightened; the veins of the neck were swollen and the cords of it stood out, and these moved upward and downward like living reptiles; the fingers of both hands were stiffened and held widely apart, and they seemed bloodless. Altogether it was a revolting transformation which Nick Carter viewed at that moment.

During the spasm, or paroxysm—it was one or the other—Gastor remained silent, save for a form of stertorous breathing which was an indication of the struggle the man was making. But, at last, it was apparently past; the muscles of his body relaxed, and little by little Castor resumed a normal attitude and expression.

He had won out in that struggle, but, watching it as Nick Carter had done, the detective could not help concluding that this particular struggle had been a worse one than usual, and that not very many more of the same sort could be undergone without a total surrender of the man to the madness that battled within him—until he should utterly succumb to his affliction, and become an incurable maniac.

The silent battle over, the man arose again, and crossed once more to the door which communicated with the pawnshop. He unlocked and opened it, leaving it ajar; then he resumed his seat and called to the Jew.

There was an interval of silence, and then, visibly trembling, Isaacs entered the rear room.

"I was drop asleep," he said apologetically, while his eyes searched eagerly about him for some sign of the "Chimmy" he had left in that room to do the killing.

"Who has been here?" demanded Castor, paying no attention to what Isaacs had said.

"Von of my friends, Mister Heymann. It vas Chimmy Plake. He vas one of dem crooks I told you about. Mebby you vas see him bimeby. I told him about you, and——"

"And, I suppose, you asked him to help you to murder me, didn't you?"

Even Nick was startled by this abrupt question, but he instantly smiled, for he realized that the question was merely the consequence of the natural suspicion under which Castor must be laboring all the time. But the Jew could not understand this, and he started guiltily, and he exclaimed:

"Oh, my! oh, my!"

"You have seen all that money, and you want it, don't you?" was the next question; but Isaacs could only groan in reply, and this but added to the suspicions of Castor. "I see that it is true," he added. "Well, be careful how you try to murder me, or you may be the victim yourself. Go back into your shop now. I will call you here to me presently."

The Jew was frightened. He turned about precipitately; and he almost broke into a run when, upon looking backward over his shoulder, he perceived that Castor was following him.

He got behind the counter with all the speed he could use; but Castor paid no further attention to him, merely passing him and going to the front door, where he withdrew the key from the lock and dropped it into his pocket.

"Vot for you do dot?" cried Isaacs angrily. "How vas gustomers to come into de place if you vas lock de door? Hey?"

"Why didn't you ask yourself that question before *you* locked it?" was the reply. "I attempted to return that way and found the door locked. That is why I supposed you had thought of murdering me. I see I was not so far wrong, after all. I will attend to your case later."

"Oh, my! oh, my!" groaned the Jew.

But Castor did not heed him.

He returned to the chair by the table, half closing the door as he passed through it; and he seemed instantly to make himself oblivious to his surroundings.

Nick thought that the old Jew might have gone mad himself, with fear, then, had not he believed so thoroughly in the nearness of "Chimmy Plake." But the detective could hear him muttering: "Oh, my! oh, my!" over and over again to himself, nevertheless.

But apparently Castor speedily forgot the presence of the Jew.

When he seated himself at the table, he took from an inner pocket of his coat a small, flat pasteboard box. Removing the cover, he extracted from it a phial, and from the phial he removed a rubber cork.

Then he held the phial between himself and the light, and remarked, as he gazed upon it:

"Only a few drops more; that is all there is left to me; and I cannot procure more of it, for I shall never return again to the country from which it comes. But there is enough, if I am careful; enough for this old Jew, and for the two others I *must* kill. But, no! There are not *two* others, now. There is only one other. That lieutenant. He is now all that remains, for Nick Carter will be dead in a few hours; quite dead. I have managed to secrete the beetle in his pocket, and after a time he will draw out the little box and wonder what is inside of it; that is, if his accursed cunning doesn't warn him not to open it."

Nick Carter, listening, caught his breath with sudden alarm. He understood perfectly well, now, to what Castor was referring. He understood that Castor had followed after Jimmy Blake, and had managed to introduce one of the death-dealing beetles into his pocket, supposing him to be Nick Carter.

The very thing that Nick had feared had happened—and it was too late to warn Jimmy, for by this time he was doubtless on the train that was bearing him westward.

He understood now that Castor had doubtless watched, and had seen the parting between Jimmy and Nick on the street, had supposed that Jimmy was Nick, had left the pawnshop by means of the

secret way, had followed the disguised crook, and—well, he had told what had happened.

For an instant Nick thought of stepping out into the room then, of clapping the irons upon this madman, and of getting word to Jimmy by telegraph, as soon as it might be done, but a second thought convinced him of the uselessness of such an attempt—of its utter impracticability; and his attention was arrested again by other things that Castor was doing.

From one of the side pockets of his coat he took a small box, and pushing back the slide, he peered into it, eagerly.

"Four," he said, under his breath.

Then, with a quick motion, he turned the phial, neck downward, over the box, and allowed the few drops of liquid to drip into it; and he held both receptacles in their respective positions until the last drop was exhausted from the glass vessel.

Then, with great care, he returned the cork to the bottle, and stood the latter on the table near him, remarking as he did so:

"That ought to do for the Jew. I will drop the bottle on the floor, and break it; then I will force him to gather up the fragments. If he does that, he is as good as dead already, for afterward he is sure to carry his fingers to his lips or his nostrils."

CHAPTER XI.

THE BROKEN GLASS.

Castor shoved the slide of the box back into its place, and snapped a rubber band around it; and Nick Carter understood by what he had seen and heard that it now contained four of the beetles which Castor used, which would presently have smeared the deadly poison over their tiny legs and feet, and that, if they were not somehow prevented, would eventually communicate that deadly toxin to the intended victims of this madman.

Castor returned the box to the pocket from which he had taken it. Then he picked up the bottle which had contained the poison, and hurled it sharply against the hearth, beneath the mantel.

It fell to the floor, shattered into many fragments, and with the usual noise of breaking glass; and from the shop the old Jew called out, affrightedly:

"Vot vos dot, Mr. Heymann?"

"I have broken a bottle; that is all," was the reply from Castor. "Come here, Isaacs."

The Jew shuffled in that direction, and presently appeared in the doorway. Castor pointed toward the fragments of the broken bottle.

"It contained some medicine I have been taking for a cold," he said. "I am sorry I have broken it. Pick up the pieces before you tread upon them, and so cut your feet."

"Dick dem up your own self," retorted Isaacs, angrily. "Mebby you tink dot I——"

Castor started to his feet, his eyes blazing, and the Jew ceased abruptly in what he was about to say.

"Pick them up, I say!" repeated Castor, this time with utter coldness, but with such fierce menace in his tones that the Jew was frightened.

He turned toward the bits of broken glass, and was on the point of stooping forward to obey the order, when he heard a low breath from behind the curtains at his right.

Lifting his eyes, even as he was bending forward, he saw a warning gesture made by a human hand which he supposed belonged to "Chimmy," and he heard the one whispered word:

"Don't!"

He straightened up as if he had received an electric shock, and half turning, would have fled into the interior of his pawnshop, had not the form of Castor intervened between him and the open doorway.

"Pick up those pieces!" said Castor.

"I von't!"

"Pick them up, I say!"

"I von't! I von't! I yon't! Doze pieces of glass are poisoned. I haf been varned! Dere——"

With a cry of rage the madman sprang toward him, but with an agility surprising in one of his years, Isaacs eluded the attack, darting behind the table and remaining there, so that the two stood facing each other across it, the madman glaring, the Jew trembling with terror.

The latter could no longer control himself, nor the terror which had now gotten control of him.

"Chimmy! Chimmy!" he called out, excitedly. "For de love of Abraham, Chimmy! Vere are you, Chimmy! Dis man iss crazy! He vill kill me already! Oh, my! oh, my! Chimmy! Chimmy!"

Castor had been in the act of starting forward again to the attack, but at the very evident suggestion that the Jew was calling to some person who was concealed in or near that room, he halted.

"Who are you calling to?" he demanded.

"Chimmy! Chimmy Blake!" yelled the Jew.

Still, Nick Carter did not interfere. His position was such that he could rush in upon the scene at any instant now and prevent the commission of a crime, and he wished to see all that could happen before he did so, and to let these two play out their act to the end.

But when "Chimmy" still declined to respond to the cry, the Jew became angry. He had seen the warning hand, and had heard the warning whisper, and he knew that "Chimmy" was concealed close by him.

"He iss behind doze curtains!" he called, pointing with trembling finger toward the very curtains behind which the detective was, in reality, concealed.

Castor turned his head to look. It gave the Jew an opportunity, and he took advantage of it.

He seized upon a heavy inkstand which was upon the table, and unmindful of the ink that was spilled about him, hurled the missile straight at the head of the madman.

The aim was bad. It was taken too hastily. The inkstand did not hit the object of it squarely, although it did find a mark.

It struck Castor on the breast, spattering his shirt-front with ink; and it sent him staggering backward, although not with sufficient force to cause him to fall.

But again the Jew was quick to act.

He sprang around the table and was upon the madman, on the instant—before Nick Carter had any idea of his intention—but he was hurled backward again, as if he were a child, and he fell to the floor, on his back, with his eyes rolling with terror and his whole form in a tremble of fright.

And Castor advanced and stood over him, looking down and grinning upon his intended victim, who writhed on the floor under his burning gaze.

It was then when Nick Carter chose to step from behind his place of concealment, for he remembered that Castor believed Nick Carter to be on board a train that was speeding westward—that the madman really expected that he, the detective, should be dead at that very moment.

The Jew saw the movement of the curtains when Nick Carter stepped out from behind them; he saw the detective appear, and he let out a yell of frantic joy to think that succor had at last arrived.

The cry caused Castor to turn about.

He, too, saw Nick Carter, but with very different emotions from those which affected the Jew.

Nick had confidently expected that the madman would turn the fury of the attack upon him; and leap upon him instantly, so that a struggle would follow; and he was prepared for it.

But no such thing happened.

Castor merely stared, apparently spellbound, but with no evidence of fear in his bearing.

Then he smiled. Then he chuckled audibly. Then he spoke, and Nick stood quite still, listening.

"So," said Castor, "you are really dead at last, are you? I thought I would get you this time. You are not the first of my victims who has returned and tried to haunt me. But I do not fear you. Fear is not in me, save for the poison in—but I have no more of it. It is gone now."

The Jew, in the meantime, retained his position on the floor, either not desiring or not daring to move, and so they made an interesting tableau.

Nick Carter advanced a step, and Castor retreated exactly the same distance.

"No you don't," he said. "I will not let you come nearer. You are harmless where you are, but who can tell what would happen if you should touch me. No; you must not come any nearer to me than you are."

Then, with a sudden motion, so quick as not to be guarded against, and so unexpected, Castor dropped one hand into the pocket where he had put the box containing the beetles; and he drew it forth and hurled it at the head of the detective, with a laugh of crazy glee as he did so.

Nick was obliged to dodge the missile.

It happened that at the same instant it was hurled toward him the Jew had collected his energies and leaped to his feet.

He also had a distinct object in view, and it was made evident by his sudden leap toward the fake wardrobe, which opened the way to the secret egress from the place.

Isaacs had already given sufficient evidence of his agility, but he had done nothing which compared in quickness with the move he made then.

He was at the wardrobe and had jerked it open, even while Nick Carter was dodging the box that had been thrown at his head; and the Jew was through the false wardrobe and out of sight in a jiffy. As he leaped through the opening, Castor turned with a cry of rage, because he saw his intended victim escaping him, and darted in pursuit.

And Castor, by accident or design, slammed the wardrobe door shut after him, so that there was the fraction of an instant, during which the detective was recovering his equilibrium, when he was alone in that room.

And even then he remembered what it was that had been thrown at his head, and what would happen if the contents of that box escaped from it and should crawl away.

The detective wasted just that fraction of time which was required to glance toward the fallen box, to perceive that it had not been broken open, and that the elastic was still in place around it, to stoop forward and seize it and drop it inside one of his own pockets, and then he darted in pursuit of the two men.

As Nick dashed into the secret passageway, he could hear the two men clattering through a corridor ahead of him. He followed as rapidly as he could go.

The passageway gave upon the yard in the rear of the building, and just as Nick reached it, he saw the figure of Castor disappearing through a small door in the high board fence.

Instantly Nick dashed after him.

He pulled the door open, and sprang into the street, reaching it just in time to see old Isaacs throw himself into the arms of a passing policeman, and to see Castor spring upon both men, carrying them to the ground together with the suddenness and the weight of his totally unexpected attack.

But Castor did not wait to continue the attack.

The instant he had floored the two, so to speak, he dashed away again, down the street toward Ninth Avenue, seeming suddenly to realize his own danger, which had not occurred to him before.

Nick was almost within reach of him when he started on again, but, by luck more than by design, Castor eluded the detective, and sped onward down the thoroughfare as if the devil was after him, and he ran like a deer, darting in and out as he sped onward, eluding those who essayed to stop him, knocking over women and children who interposed themselves in the way of his flight, and speeding on again.

He laughed and yelled as he ran. He was now thoroughly a madman again. He seemed to take a sudden and a mad delight in the race, and one might have thought that he had quite forgotten the reason for his flight.

The detective was close behind him; not more than twenty feet lay between them as they ran, but for a time it seemed impossible for Nick to gain, although he did not lose an inch in the race, either.

Once he thought of making use of some sort of weapon to arrest that mad flight, for there was no telling what thing Castor might attempt to do at any moment; and Nick decided that he would resort to some such extreme measure before the next avenue was reached—if the chase should continue so far.

But it was not to be.

Presently the detective saw that he was gaining. Then he came within reach of the fleeing man, and with a great leap forward, he seized him by the nape of the neck, and throwing all his great strength into the effort, unfooted Castor—and they both rolled to the pavement together.

CHAPTER XII.

NICK CARTER WINS A MAN.

The struggle was short and sharp, but terrific while it lasted.

Nick Carter and Castor rolled over and over together on the pavement, the latter fighting with his teeth and nails, and in every way endeavoring to tear his antagonist, as a wild animal might have done; while Nick sought to avoid punishment.

At last, with a deftly delivered upper-cut, he succeeded in striking the crazed man beneath the chin, and so effectually putting him out of the game—and then, with the irons snapped upon Castor's wrists behind his back, Nick arose, for by that time others of the pursuers had arrived upon the scene, and there were policemen at hand to restrain the crazy man.

As Nick Carter turned about, to see who had followed, and to discovered if the Jew was anywhere near, he met with a surprise—and he saw looks of astonishment dawning upon the faces of others who were near to them, particularly the two policemen who had arrived on the scene.

The surprise was in the fact that the detective found himself face to face with a perfect counterpart of himself; and for an instant he was as perplexed as the others were.

But he knew at once who it was.

It was Jimmy Blake, supposed to be speeding westward on a railway—Jimmy Blake, who might have been dead at that very moment, had the designs of Castor not miscarried, by some chance that was as yet unexplained.

But it was Jimmy, nevertheless, as full of life and good spirits as when he had left Nick Carter at the curb in front of the saloon on Eighth Avenue.

But the two policemen who had appeared upon the scene from the direction of Ninth Avenue, and the other one who had met the Jew with such disastrous consequences, saw two Nick Carters before them, and they did not conceal their amazement, for Castor had suddenly become strangely quiet and subdued.

There was reason for this, too.

He, also, saw the two men so strangely alike. He, also, was amazed by the sight, but for an entirely different reason.

He began to chuckle; then he laughed outright; then he shouted.

"Two Nick Carters!" he yelled. "Two of them! No wonder that I could not kill him! No wonder that he lives! Two Nick Carters! Two! *Two!* Two!"

And the crowd which had quickly gathered, as crowds will on such occasions, took up the mad shout; and it yelled:

"Two Nick Carters! Two Nick Carters!"

"What does it mean?" demanded one of the officers, elbowing his way nearer to Nick, but addressing Jimmy, who, it will be remembered, was the better dressed of the two; but the real Nick Carter replied to the question:

"It is one of my tricks," he said, thinking that the statement would sufficiently explain the circumstance.

"Well, but which of you is Nick Carter? And what is all this about?" insisted the officer.

"I am Nick Carter. This gentleman is a friend of mine," returned the detective.

"Who is this man whom you have captured?"

"He is Castor, the murderer."

"He may be a murderer, but he is as crazy as a bedbug, all the same."

"Oh, yes; there is no doubt of that."

"Hear him laugh! Gee!"

"Oh, yes, I hear him all right."

"I have sent a call in for the patrol wagon."

"Good. I will wait here till it comes. Tell one of the men to report at once to the commissioner in my name that Castor is caught, will you?"

"Yes; but——"

Castor again broke out into a paroxysm at that instant, and he struggled so wildly that the united efforts of the three officers were necessary to hold him. Then, after a time, it passed off and he became quiet again; and he remained so until the arrival of the patrol wagon.

There was another struggle after that, to get him inside of it, but it was finally accomplished, and the vehicle rolled away with Castor toward the station house of the precinct.

The detective did not think it necessary that he should accompany his prisoner to the station house, but he did take the precaution of warning the officers of the man's character, and of telling them about the other escape. He warned them to watch him thoroughly, and not to relax their vigilance for a moment.

Then he turned toward the policeman who had been so unceremoniously bowled over by the fleeing Jew.

"Well, Conley," he said, "where is Isaacs? You knew him, didn't you?"

"Sure I knew him, Mr. Carter. Say, which of you *is* Mr. Carter, anyhow?"

"I am. This gentleman is an old acquaintance of yours, only you don't recognize him just now, and he doesn't wish you to do so."

"Oh, I suppose it's Chick."

Suppose whatever you like, Conley. Where is the Jew?"

"I let him go back to the pawnshop. He said it was alone."

"It probably is, by this time. The Jew didn't stop there; you can bank on that, Conley. He will keep right on going, and he won't stop to collect many of the valuables that are in the shop, either. He has been paid for all of them. By the way, Conley!"

"Well, sir?"

"Go to the nearest telephone, and tell the lieutenant on duty at the station house that Castor has a bunch of money concealed on his person; that every dollar of it must be accounted for."

"Money, sir?"

"Yes; a fortune. Attend to it right away, will you?"

"Sure. But about the Jew——"

"Never mind the Jew. He hadn't done much. Let him go. If there is anything more to attend to in that quarter, I will see to it."

He took Jimmy by the arm then, and they walked on together, as far as the door in the high fence, and they passed through that into the yard, and thence into the pawnshop.

The boy Pete was found in a side room, tied and gagged, proving that Castor had guessed his real business and pounced upon him. After releasing and suitably rewarding the smart little chap, Nick looked eagerly about the pawnshop.

But Isaacs had been there before them. He had been busy, too.

Empty trays stood about on the counter, and it could be seen at a glance that Isaacs had emptied their contents into some receptacle that he had carried away with him.

"Let him go—for the present," said Nick. "I can find him when I need to. Now, Jimmy, I want you to tell me what happened to you."

"Why, nothing happened to me, only that his nibs—the crazy guy you call Castor—followed me when I went up the street. I saw him behind me before I had gone half a dozen blocks toward the station."

"And you guessed that he thought it was not you, but me, whom he was following, eh?"

"Sure I did. I played him for the part, too."

"What did you do."

"I let him trail me to the station. Then he edged up close to me, and finally he dropped a little pasteboard box into my pocket. I saw him do it."

"And you remembered what I had said about envelopes, and applied it to boxes as well?"

"Bet your life I did."

"Well?"

"As soon as he turned his back, I picked the box out of my pocket; but I took the coat off first to make sure that the box hadn't opened. Then I took it out, and tied it up tight with a piece of string. I've got it now."

He produced it as he ceased speaking, and Nick took it, throwing it into the open grate in the room at the rear, where he piled papers over it; then he found a broom, and with great care swept up all the bits of the broken bottle, and threw them after the box; and then he touched a lighted match to the paper.

In a moment more there was a fierce blaze, and on top of that he consigned the wooden box that Castor had so lately hurled at him, and they watched the blaze until the poison was consumed.

"There is one thing about that poison," said the detective. "It is rather volatile, and also, it burns freely. There won't be a vestige of it left, now, thank Heaven!"

Soon thereafter Nick and Blake left the place together, and walked down the street.

"Jimmy," said Nick, "when do you start West?"

"I don't know. To-morrow, probably."

"Jimmy, why don't you reform, and live straight? I'll help you, if you will; and I can help you."

"I know it, Nick. That is what I wanted to ask you about. Since I talked with you to-day, I have got the idea. I have been thinking it over. If you will help me——"

"I *will* help you, Jimmy."

"I think—if you would—shake hands—with me—that I——"

"Shake hands with you! You bet your life I will. I'd rather shake hands with you, Jimmy, on that proposition than to grasp the hand of the finest gentleman in Gotham to-day. It is more honor to do it. Shake, Jimmy!"

They paused right there in the street, and shook hands.

"God bless you, Mr. Carter!" said Blake, with tears in his eyes. "I am Mr. James Blakesley now. That is my right name. I'll take the train West to-night, to see my mother. I can look her straight in the eyes, now, thanks to you."

"God bless and help you, Blakesley," said Nick, with deep feeling. "But no thanks are due to me; they are due to yourself and to your mother."

It looked as though Nick Carter, in following out his case, had not only won that clearly, but saved a man who might yet prove valuable to his fellows.

THE END.

The next number (661) will contain "The Castor Riddle; or, Nick Carter's Search for a Hidden Fortune."

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

NEW YORK, August 21, 1909.

TERMS TO NICK CARTER WEEKLY MAIL SUBSCRIBERS.

(Postage Free.)

Single Copies or Back Numbers, 5c. Each.

3 months	65c.	One year	$2.50
4 months	85c.	2 copies one year	4.00
6 months	$1.25	1 copy two years	4.00

How to Send Money—By post-office or express money order, registered letter, bank check or draft, at our risk. At your own risk if sent by currency, coin, or postage stamps in ordinary letter.

Receipts—Receipt of your remittance is acknowledged by proper change of number on your label. If not correct you have not been properly credited, and should let us know at once.

OSMOND G. SMITH, GEORGE C. SMITH, Proprietors.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

A SPLENDID SHOT.

"I'll never speak to you again, Sam Strode; you can take your rifle and go home. If I couldn't shoot better than you I'd be ashamed to own a prize rifle."

"That's all right, Dave McClanahan, but you didn't shoot better than me, and now, because I won, you are jealous and mad. If you don't want to speak to me, you needn't. I can get along without you," and then Sam took up his rifle and walked briskly away.

Ever since they had first met, eleven years before, Sam Strode and Dave McClanahan had been chums. They were only four years old then, but their childish clasp of hands, and promise to always be the best of friends, had held good until the present time.

There had been a shooting match on the outskirts of the old-fashioned Mississippi village in which they lived, and Sam had won the first prize, a silver-plated, thirty-four-calibre rifle. Dave had won the second prize, a ten-dollar gold piece, but heretofore he had always excelled Sam in shooting, and now he was feeling particularly chagrined over his defeat, inasmuch as this match decided who was entitled to the honors of being the best rifle shot among the boys in the village, as well as who was to own the silver rifle. Dave had considered himself a certain winner before the contest.

Sam had just received his prize that morning and taken it over to show to Dave, who, when he saw the coveted rifle, had lost his temper, and so they had quarreled and parted in anger.

For some moments after Sam disappeared around the corner of the house Dave stood irresolute, as if to run after and recall his friend, but visions of the plated rifle, resting in the hollow of Sam's arm, arose before him, and he muttered to himself:

"I said I'd never speak to him again, and I won't. He knows I can shoot better than he can, and he ought to give me the rifle, even if he did make the best score. I guess he'll go straight to that kingfisher's nest, but I'll take the short cut and get there first."

During the previous summer the two boys had collected birds' eggs in partnership, and now this season they had concluded to add to their collection the eggs of a few birds which they had been unable to secure the year before.

Among these was the egg of the kingfisher, and, as they had discovered the nest of a pair of these birds, they had determined to secure the eggs.

"We'll get that nest Saturday," Sam had said at the shooting match.

But from the manner in which Dave rushed into the house to get his tree climbers after the quarrel, it appeared as if he had substituted "I" for "we."

A half hour after securing his climbers, Dave had reached the banks of a stream, which, from its bed of limestone, was called Rock Creek.

Advancing to a little nook in the bank, he drew a small skiff from among some thick-growing bushes, and stepped into it.

Under the influence of his muscular strokes, the boat was soon skimming swiftly along up the stream.

"My, but won't Sam be mad when he finds I've already got the eggs! It'll serve him right, though," said Dave, half aloud.

What his former chum had done to bring forth this last remark he could not have told, but he was angry now, and the fancied wrong, as is often the case, was rapidly becoming in his mind a real one.

In a few minutes he turned the boat toward the shore, and then, applying extra force to his oars, he ran the skiff high up on the sandy beach. Then, hastily springing out, he sat down on a log and fastened on his climbers.

These instruments he had secured from a telegraph lineman, and although he had experienced great difficulty in adopting them at first, he was now quite an expert in their use.

A short distance from where he had landed there stood a large sycamore tree, the branches of which hung well out over the stream. In the forks of one of the lowest of these limbs rested the coveted nest.

On a stump out in the creek, and about twenty feet from the tree, the male bird was stretching its head from side to side in its endeavors to see any fish which might swim by in the clear water.

The boy stopped to watch the antics of this bird for a minute or two, and then climbed up the trunk of the old sycamore. After reaching the first fork he stopped to rest. In the meantime the kingfisher had caught sight of the intruder in its domain, and darted swiftly to its mate on the nest.

Then the two birds began to circle rapidly above Dave's head, and to fly with great force at his eyes. They were very persistent in their attack, but he finally managed to frighten them away with a switch.

"I didn't know there was so much fight in your family, Mr. Kingfisher," said Dave, "but I don't suppose you are very dangerous. If I didn't want to get away from here before Sam comes, I'd entertain you a while."

Having now fully recovered his breath, he slowly and cautiously made his way out on the swaying branches, until he reached the nest.

Once there, it was but the work of a moment to reach up and lift the eggs from their rightful place to the little cotton-lined box he carried for the purpose.

His father had forbidden his robbing birds' nests, but, like a great many other heedless boys, Dave frequently disobeyed the wishes of his parents.

After closing the box and placing it in his hat, so that the eggs would not be broken, he started to crawl back to the fork of the tree.

At that moment the two birds returned and began to dart around above his head at a furious rate.

They were screeching like mad, and Dave, thinking they were about to attack him again, looked up quickly.

His surprise was great, then, to find that they were taking

no notice whatever of his presence, but were flying back and forth at some object concealed in the leaves above. His first thought was that Sam had preceded him and was hiding there, so he called out angrily:

"Come on down, sneak! I see you, and know that you are after this nest. Nobody but a thief would act as you are doing, Sam Strode, so it's no wonder you are hiding!"

Dave did not think of it, but he was calling Sam a thief for doing the very thing he himself was guilty of.

"But was it Sam?" he wondered, after receiving no reply.

The question was answered in a most startling manner, for just then the wind blew the branches on one side, and the astonished boy saw, not five feet over his head, a huge blacksnake swinging to and fro, with its tail barely encircling a limb.

Dave instinctively dodged back, and not a moment too soon, for the long, black reptile loosened its hold immediately and came rushing through the leaves directly past the spot where the boy's head had been.

Dave was so frightened that he lost his balance, and he, too, went crashing through the branches to the water below, where his body landed directly on the snake and carried it to the bottom. When the boy rose to the surface the angry reptile was coiling its sinuous body around his neck.

Dave was, on ordinary occasions, an excellent swimmer, but under the present circumstances, it required a very great exertion for him to reach the old stump in the centre of the stream, after finding it impossible to climb up the steep bank by the tree.

By the time he managed to firmly grasp a loose root on the stump, the snake had wound itself in a great mass about his neck, and was slowly strangling him.

The boy's face was very pale from fright, and he was even now gasping for breath, but he would not give in.

"Better die fighting than like a coward, Dave," he had once heard his father say; so he reached forward with his disengaged hand, and grabbed at the neck of the snake, in hopes of securing a firm grasp, then to choke it as he was being choked.

The reptile's eyes blazed like little coals of fire, and its forked tongue shot rapidly back and forth, as its head darted out of the reach of the boy's hand.

The bite of the blacksnake is not poisonous, and it seldom ever strikes its victim, as do other varieties of snakes, contenting itself with its great strangling power.

Dave knew this; so he did not hesitate to make another attempt to catch the reptile's neck.

In this latter effort he was successful; but the pressure about his own neck was so great that he had barely enough strength left to retain his hold on the reptile, so, therefore, could not benefit himself to any great degree.

"If I had not treated Sam so badly, or even if I had obeyed father when he told me not to rob the birds, I would not be here now," were the bitter thoughts that forced themselves through his brain like a lightning flash.

The snake was now exerting a still greater pressure on its victim's neck, and the boy was growing cold with horror as his situation grew more desperate. His breath was coming in gasps, and he felt that his eyes were bursting from his head. Cold drops of perspiration stood out on his forehead and face.

He tried to cry out, but the roof of his mouth was so hot and dry that he could not make a sound.

He gave himself up for lost, and was about to unloosen his hold on the snake's neck, when a voice cried out excitedly from the bank:

"Hold its head up above you!"

Dave did not see the speaker, nor did he recognize the voice, nor how he was to be benefited by doing as he was directed; but he drew himself together, and, with a great effort, in which he threw his whole remaining strength, he held the hand containing the snake's head as high above his head as he could reach.

There was a slight pause, which seemed like hours to the strangling boy; then the sharp crack of a rifle rang out, the snake's head fell over, its body slowly uncoiled, and the wriggling mass dropped from Dave's neck and sank into the water.

At the same time Dave McClanahan fell back insensible, and his body once more followed that of the snake to the bottom of the creek.

A few days later, and after he had almost recovered from his adventure with the blacksnake, Dave said to Sam Strode, who was sitting by his side, fondling the silver rifle:

"Sam, old fellow, you are the best shot, after all, for I could not have hit that snake's head in a hundred years. I owe you twice for saving my life, Sam, as you also saved me from drowning, and I'll never get through thanking you."

To which Sam laughingly replied:

"No thanks to me, Dave. If mother hadn't sent me after that stray cow, as soon as I reached home after leaving you that day, you would not be here now; so it was mother and the cow that saved you, not me. But, say," he added, "let's not rob any more birds' nests."

And they never did.

SOME AMAZING GAMBLING SECRETS.

"All men who play with professional gamblers must lose." That is what Mr. John Phillip Quinn will tell you. And he should know. For twenty-five years Mr. Quinn was a professional gambler in this country, and such was his skill at card and dice manipulation that he quickly earned the title of "Prince of Sharpers."

"At one time," he remarked lately, "I drew twenty-five per cent. commission on the profits from the keepers of four gambling dens. If a stranger came in with a big roll of greenbacks the word went round, 'Put Quinn on him.' And that stranger would have very few notes left when I had finished with him. I tell you that with feelings of sorrow rather than pride; for my mission to-day is to fight the great evil of gambling—not by preaching, mark you, but by demonstration."

And the young man who professes to "know a thing or two," who reckons he is "fly enough" to checkmate any "sharp" who tries tricks on him, will have his self-confidence a good deal shaken after watching Mr. Quinn's demonstrations.

"I am a converted gambler," continued Mr. Quinn. "I was imprisoned for a crime I did not commit, but while in prison I was convinced that the crooked game was no good. And that is why, for close upon twenty years, I have been unmasking the tricks of the professional gambler, in order to prove that the amateur wins or loses at the former's pleasure. Look here—we'll just have a few games to ourselves. What shall it be first—dice?"

The writer acquiesced, bearing in mind, however, that Mr. Quinn is considered to be the world's greatest expert at trick dice throwing. "There is the leather cup, and there are five dice. Examine them carefully, and see that they are not loaded in any way." Everything seemed satisfactory, and the correspondent threw first—two fives, a three, a four, and a six.

"Now," said Mr. Quinn, "I am going to beat you. I shall thrown five sixes, and mark you this, while I am talking to you I am tricking you. There you have five sixes, and no matter what you throw I can always equal it or beat it if I choose to do so. How? That is a question I prefer not to answer. My concern is to illustrate the futility of playing with professional gamblers. They are full of cun-

ning tricks and have hundreds of ingenious devices to defraud."

It was exactly as Mr. Quinn said. Although I tried for ten minutes to beat him in a throw of dice, I found it impossible. And it was the same with cards. He won just how he pleased, although he allowed me to shuffle and pack the cards. Not only did he win, however, but immediately he had dealt me a hand he called out what were the values of the cards I held, as readily as if he had been looking over my shoulder.

"Of course," said Mr. Quinn, "when the professional plays he loses occasionally in order not to excite suspicion; but shuffle, cut, and deal how you please, he has a trick for every move, and you are bound to lose in the end. After all, it is not surprising. He has learned all the tricks of his trade. You know none—although you may fancy you do—and of course you come off second best.

"If you were an engineer you would not think of competing with a lawyer or a doctor in a legal or medical argument and backing yourself to win; and yet there are thousands of men to-day who, excited by the thought of gain, pit themselves against the professional gambler, although they do not possess a particle of his knowledge of games of chance."

Expressing a wish to see further demonstrations of the power of the professional gambler, Mr. Quinn produced a metal frame or box for holding a pack of cards, the construction of which seemingly made it quite impossible for any but the top card to be taken out without the fact being clearly seen.

"With this box, which is full of tricks," said Mr. Quinn, "is played the favorite 'sucker's game,' as it is known among the crooks of America. You shuffle the cards and place them in, so. Now to you it seems impossible to take other than the top card. What will you back—red or black? Red. You lose; it is black. Again you bet, say, five dollars that the next card is red. There again you lose. Now I am going to let you win. You put your money on black. Black it is." And so the game went on until the pack was almost exhausted, and in every case I won or lost, as Mr. Quinn pleased.

"Pure fake," he said. "If I wanted to relieve you of, say fifty or a hundred dollars, I should let you win sometimes, but would rook you in the end. There have been more people ruined at this game than at any other. This box is identical with thousands being used in gambling dens to-day. It looks simple enough, doesn't it? Just a framework, with a spring which presses the cards to the top and allows them to be slipped off one by one. It is that seeming simplicity which enables the professional gambler to blind the eyes of the greenhorn. When Mr. Jerome, the prosecuting attorney of New York, was fighting the gambling fraternity there, he captured twenty-two of these boxes, and it was my demonstration of the ease with which it is possible for the professional gambler to rob a victim with the aid of one of these boxes which enabled him to bring the cases home."

And after we tried roulette, at which Mr. Quinn proved himself to be the man who cannot lose, although he allowed me to spin the wheel myself and handle the ball. When I said red the ball always went into black, and vice versa, except when he told me that I was going to win. The apparatus was completely under control.

And yet Mr. Quinn looks so innocent and guileless. He is a slight, elderly gentleman, clean-shaven, white-haired—a picture of the meekest of parsons. Such is his knowledge of the art of gambling that he has been offered $5,000, a comfortable home, and competency for life if he will refrain from publishing his book, "Fools of Fortune," which exposes every gambling device and trick of that profession. Amazing, indeed, are his demonstrations, and, after seeing them, one cannot help arriving at the conclusion that the man who sits down to play with a professional gambler and thinks he has a fair chance has really none at all.

HOW WIND PRODUCES WAVES.

There are wind waves in water, sand, and snow. The great sea waves are produced at that part of a cyclone where the direction of the wind coincides with the direction of advance of the depression. Along this line of advance the waves in their progress are accompanied by a strong wind blowing across their ridges as long as the atmospheric depression is maintained. So the waves are developed until they become steep. The average height in feet is about half the velocity of the wind in miles.

A wind of 52 miles an hour gives the waves an average height of 26 feet, although individual waves will attain a height of 40 feet. The prevailing wind in all longitudes is westerly, so wherever a westerly wind springs up it finds a long westerly swell, the effect of a previous wind still running, and the principal effect of the newly born wind is to increase the steepness of the already running long swell so as to form majestic storm waves, which sometimes attain a length of 1,200 feet from crest to crest. The longest swells due to wind are almost invisible during storms, for they are masked by the shorter and steeper waves, but they emerge into view after or beyond the storm.

The action of the wind to drift dry sand in a procession of waves is seen in the deserts. As the sand waves cannot travel by gravitation, their movements are entirely controlled by the wind, and they are, therefore, much simpler and more regular in form and movement than ocean waves. In their greatest heights of several hundred feet the former become more complex owing to the partial consolidation of the lower layers of sand by pressure, but they still have the characteristic wave features.

In the Winnipeg prairies of Canada freshly fallen snow is drifted by wind in a procession of regular waves progressing with a visible and ghostlike motion. They are similar to desert sand waves, but less than half as steep, the wave length being fifty times as great as the height. The flatness of the wind-formed snow waves affords a valuable indication of the great distance to which hills shelter from the wind.

QUAIL FROM EGYPT.

A record consignment of 100,000 live Egyptian quails, requiring special conveyance, from Alexandria to London by way of the Manchester Ship Canal, left Alexandria on March 25, and reached Manchester, when they were transferred to a special express for London. Twenty drays were required to convey them from King's Cross to their destination.

It is most extraordinary that, although on many occasions search has been made, the breeding ground of the quails is absolutely unknown. They are trapped by Arabs, who deliver them in half dozens in boxes and baskets to the Egyptian Quail Syndicate's collecting depots, situated at all stations on the Egyptian State Railways between Alexandria and Assiout and Khartaum, and sent to the warehouse in Alexandria to await shipment. This warehouse is used exclusively for the purpose of keeping the quails until a sufficient number has been received, and is as large as the Agricultural Hall.

The quails are placed in crates six feet long with six tiers and capable of holding 600 birds for shipment. As the syndicate only receives payment for birds which are alive when delivered, very great care and attention has to be paid to them during transit.

Six Arabs are told off whose special duty it is to feed and water the birds twice every day, and during the present journey 100 bags, each weighing two hundredweight, of millet seed were consumed. On fine days the crates are brought up to a sheltered position on deck for airing.

LATEST ISSUES

MOTOR STORIES

The latest and best five-cent weekly. We won't say how interesting it is. See for yourself. High art colored covers. Thirty-two big pages. Price, 5 cents.

11—Motor Matt's Daring Rescue; or, The Strange Case of Helen Brady.
12—Motor Matt's Peril; or, Castaway in the Bahamas.
13—Motor Matt's Queer Find; or, The Secret of the Iron Chest.
14—Motor Matt's Promise; or, The Wreck of the *Hawk*.
15—Motor Matt's Submarine; or, The Strange Cruise of the *Grampus*.
16—Motor Matt's Quest; or, Three Chums in Strange Waters.
17—Motor Matt's Close Call; or, The Snare of Don Carlos.
18—Motor Matt in Brazil; or, Under the Amazon.
19—Motor Matt's Defiance; or, Around the Horn.
20—Motor Matt Makes Good; or, Another Victory for the Motor Boys.
21—Motor Matt's Launch; or, A Friend in Need.
22—Motor Matt's Enemies; or, A Struggle for the Right.
23—Motor Matt's Prize; or, The Pluck That Wins.
24—Motor Matt on the Wing; or, Flying for Fame and Fortune.

TIP TOP WEEKLY

The most popular publication for boys. The adventures of Frank and Dick Merriwell can be had only in this weekly. High art colored covers. Thirty-two pages. Price, 5 cents.

684—Dick Merriwell at the "Meet"; or, Honors Worth Winning.
685—Dick Merriwell's Protest; or, The Man Who Would Not Play Clean.
686—Dick Merriwell In The Marathon; or, The Sensation of the Great Run.
687—Dick Merriwell's Colors; or, All For the Blue.
688—Dick Merriwell, Driver; or, The Race for the Daremore Cup.
689—Dick Merriwell on the Deep; or, The Cruise of the *Yale*.
690—Dick Merriwell in the North Woods; or, The Timber Thieves of the Floodwood.
691—Dick Merriwell's Dandies; or, A Surprise for the Cowboy Nine.
692—Dick Merriwell's "Skyscooter"; or, Professor Pagan and the "Princess."
693—Dick Merriwell in the Elk Mountains; or, The Search for "Dead Injun" Mine.
694—Dick Merriwell in Utah; or, The Road to "Promised Land."
695—Dick Merriwell's Bluff; or, The Boy Who Ran Away.
696—Dick Merriwell in the Saddle; or, The Bunch from the Bar—Z.
697—Dick Merriwell's Ranch Friends; or, Sport on the Range.

NICK CARTER WEEKLY

The best detective stories on earth. Nick Carter's exploits are read the world over. High art colored covers. Thirty-two big pages. Price, 5 cents.

646—Three Times Stolen; or, Nick Carter's Strange Clue.
647—The Great Diamond Syndicate; or, Nick Carter's Cleverest Foes.
648—The House of the Yellow Door; or, Nick Carter in the Old French Quarter.
649—The Triangle Clue; or, Nick Carter's Greenwich Village Case.
650—The Hollingsworth Puzzle; or, Nick Carter Three Times Baffled.
651—The Affair of the Missing Bonds; or, Nick Carter in the Harness.
652—The Green Box Clue; or, Nick Carter's Good Friend.
653—The Taxicab Mystery; or, Nick Carter Closes a Deal.
654—The Mystery of a Hotel Room; or, Nick Carter's Best Work.
655—The Tragedy of the Well; or, Nick Carter Under Suspicion.
656—The Black Hand; or, Chick Carter's Well-laid Plot.
657—The Black Hand Nemesis; or, Chick Carter and the Mysterious Woman.
658—A Masterly Trick; or, Chick and the Beautiful Italian.
659—A Dangerous Man; or, Nick Carter and the Famous Castor Case.

For sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent to any address on receipt of price, 5 cents per copy, in money or postage stamps, by

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York

IF YOU WANT ANY BACK NUMBERS of our Weeklies and cannot procure them from your newsdealer, they can be obtained from this office direct. Fill out the following Order Blank and send it to us with the price of the Weeklies you want and we will send them to you by return mail. **POSTAGE STAMPS TAKEN THE SAME AS MONEY.**

STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City. *190*

Dear Sirs: Enclosed please find.....*cents for which send me:*

TIP TOP WEEKLY,	**Nos.**.....	**BUFFALO BILL STORIES,**	**Nos.**.....
NICK CARTER WEEKLY,	**"**	**BRAVE AND BOLD WEEKLY,**	**"** .....
DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY,	**"**	**MOTOR STORIES,**	**"** .....

Name.....*Street*.....*City*.....*State*.....

The Nick Carter Weekly

ISSUED EVERY SATURDAY **BEAUTIFUL COLORED COVERS**

When it comes to detective stories worth while, the NICK CARTER WEEKLY contains the only ones that should be considered. They are not overdrawn tales of bloodshed. They rather show the workings of one of the finest minds ever conceived by a writer.

The name of Nick Carter is familiar all over the world and the stories of his adventures are read eagerly by millions, in twenty different languages. No other stories have withstood the severe test of time so well as those contained in the NICK CARTER WEEKLY. It proves conclusively that they are best.

We give herewith a list of all the back numbers in print. You can have your news-dealer order them or they will be sent direct by the publishers to any address upon receipt of the price in money or postage-stamps.

334—Nick Carter's Crooked Trail.
335—Nick Carter's False Clue.
346—Nick Carter On and Off the Scent.
352—Nick Carter and the Langworthy Treasure.
353—Nick Carter Forging the Fetters.
354—Nick Carter from Peril to Peril.
358—Nick Carter and the Triple Identity.
359—Nick Carter and the "Queen of Diamonds."
360—Nick Carter and the Missing Jewels.
361—Nick Carter's Great Success.
362—Nick Carter's Search for a Motive.
370—Nick Carter's Diamond Trail.
374—The Sign of the Dagger.
377—The Last of the Seven.
382—Holding Up a Nation.
383—Kidnaped in Broad Daylight.
385—The Secret Order of Associated Crooks.
386—When Aces Were Trumps.
387—The Gambler's Last Hand.
388—The Murder at Linden Fells.
389—Mercedes Danton's Double.
390—The Millionaire's Nemesis.
391—A Princess of the Underworld.
392—A Queen of Her Kind.
393—Isabel Benton's Trump Card.
394—A Princess of Hades.
401—The House with the Open Door.
402—The Society of Assassination.
404—The Trail of the Vampire.
406—The Captain of the Vampire.
407—A Bank President's Plot.
409—The Carruthers Puzzle.
412—The Point of a Dagger.
422—By Command of the Czar.
423—The Conspiracy of an Empire.
424—A Queen of Vengeance.
429—The Phantom Highwayman.
430—A Million Dollar Hold-up.
431—Nick Carter and the Man with the Crooked Mind.
432—Nick Carter's Convict Enemy.
433—The Pirate of the Sound.
434—The Cruise of the Shadow.
435—A Prince of Impostors.
436—The Mystery of John Dashwood.
437—Following a Blind Trail.
438—The Crime of the Potomac.
439—In the Shadow of Death.
440—The Fear-Haunted Broker.
442—A Clever Grab.
443—The Mystery of the Front Room.
444—The Crime of Union Square.
445—A Millionaire Criminal.
446—The Broadway Cross.
447—The Princess Possess.
448—The Quexel Tragedy.
450—Missing; a Sack of Gold.
451—The Great Cathedral Mystery.
452—A Play for a Million.
453—The Pear-Shaped Diamonds.
455—Nick Carter's Human Weapon.
456—The Compact of Death.
457—The Rajah's Revenge.
458—A Tragedy of the Sea.
460—Kairo the Strong.
461—Nick Carter's Strange Power.
462—Nick Carter and the Marixburg Affair.
463—The Millionaire Cracksman.
464—The Mystery Man.
465—Scylla the Sea Robber.
466—The Beautiful Pirate of Oyster Bay.
467—The Man from Nevada.
468—Maguey, the Mexican.
469—Pedro, the Dog Detective.
470—The Automobile Fiend.
471—Bellini, the Black Hand.
472—The Black Hand's Nemesis.
473—An Expert in Craft.
474—Nick Carter's Terrible Experience.
475—The Mystery of an Untold Crime.
476—Diana, the Arch-demon.
478—A Wizard of the Highway.
479—Abducted in Broad Day.
480—The Tong of the Tailless Dragon.
481—The Padlocked Mystery.
482—Dema, the Dangerous.
483—Nick Carter's Murder Problem.
484—A Battle Among the Clouds.
485—The Veiled Princess.
486—The Conquest of a Kingdom.
487—The House of Skeletons.
488—A Queen of Inferno.
489—Nick Carter's Foxy Adversary.
490—Three Times in Peril.
491—The Gold Lettered Dagger.
492—That Mysterious Affair.
493—A Dead Guardian of Millions.
494—The Mysterious Treasure Hunters.
495—The Klondike Bank Puzzle.
496—The "Bad Man" of Nome.
497—The Black Flag of Piracy.
498—Following an Ocean Trail.
499—A Clue from the Clouds.
500—Praxatel, of the Ironarm.
502—Ismalla, the Chieftain.
503—Nick Carter's Earthquake Clue.
504—Nick Carter Among the Bad Men.
505—The Man of Many Faces.
506—A Letter from the Dead.
507—Bare-faced Jimmy, the Gentleman Crook.
508—The Gentleman Crook's Last Act.
509—The "Skiddoo" of the K. U. & T.
510—The Last of the Outlaws.
511—Nick Carter's Twin Mystery.
512—A Battle of Wits.
513—A Game of Five Millions.
514—Codman the Poisoner.
515—The Plot of the Poisoner.
516—The Mechanical Giant.
517—Doris, the Unknown.
518—A Dangerous Woman.
519—Madge Morley's Ghost.
520—An Automobile Mystery.
521—The Mysterious Stranger.
522—The White Arm of a Woman.
523—The Man in the Doorway.
524—The Plot of the Baron.
525—The Passenger on the Night Local.
526—A Double Mystery.
527—Clarice, the Countess.
528—Clarice, the Woman Detective.
530—An Amazonian Queen.
531—A Blackmailer's Paradise.
532—Gipsy Madge, the Blackmailer.
533—Facing an Unseen Terror.
534—Idayah, the Woman of Mystery.
535—The Making of a King.
536—The Empire of a Goddess.
537—Zanabayah, the Terrible.
538—The Seven-headed Monster.
539—The Woman of the Mask.
540—The Masked Woman's Daring Plot.
541—Hobo Harry, the Beggar King.
542—Black Madge's Hobo Gang.
543—Black Madge's Vengeance.
544—A Tragedy of the Footlights.
545—The Maynard Woman's Double.
546—Three Against Fifteen.
547—A Mystery of Two Passengers.
548—A Dead Man at the Feast.
549—The House of Secrets.
550—The Lost Bank President.
551—Ralph Bolton's Double Plot.
552—The Dare-devil Crook.
553—A Mystery from the Klondyke.
554—Returned from the Grave.
555—The Mystery Man of 7-Up Ranch.
556—A Bad Man of Montana.
557—The Man from Arizona.
558—Kid Curry's Last Stand.
559—A Beautiful Anarchist.
560—The Nihilist's Second Move.
561—The Brotherhood of Free Russia.
562—A White House Mystery.
563—The Great Spy System.
564—The Last of Mustushimi.
565—Secrets of a Haunted House.
566—A Mystery in India Ink.
567—The Plot of the Stantons.
568—The Criminal Trust.
569—The Syndicate of Crooks.
570—The Order of the Python.
571—Tried for His Life.
572—A Bargain With a Thief.
573—Peters, the Shrewd Crook.
574—The Mystery of the Empty Grave.
575—The Yellow Beryl.
576—The Dead Man on the Roof.
577—A Double-barreled Puzzle.
578—An Automobile Duel.
579—Jasper Ryan's Counter Move.
580—An International Conspiracy.
581—Plotters Against a Nation.
582—Mignon Duprez, the Female Spy
583—A Mystery of High Society.
584—A Million Dollars Reward.
585—The Signal of Seven Shots.
586—The "Shadow."
587—A Dead Man's Secret.
588—A Victim of Magic.
589—A Plot Within a Palace.
590—The Countess Zeta's Defense.
591—The Princess' Last Effort.
592—The Two Lost Chittendens.
593—Miguel, the Avenger.
594—Eulalia, the Bandit Queen.
595—The Crystal Mystery.
596—A Battle of Wit and Skill.
597—Vanderdyken, the Millionaire.
598—Patsy's Vacation Problem.
599—The King's Prisoner.
600—A Woman to the Rescue.
601—Nick Carter in Japan.
602—Talika, the Geisha Girl.
603—By Order of the Emperor.
604—The Convict's Secret.
605—The Man in the Dark.
606—An Anarchist Plot.
607—The Mysterious Mr. Peters.
608—A Woman at Bay.
609—The Balloon Tragedy.
610—Nick Carter's Strangest Case.
611—The Stolen Treasure.
612—The Island of Fire.
613—The Senator's Plot.
614—The Madness of Morgan.
615—A Million-dollar Hold-up.
616—Nick Carter's Submarine Clue.
617—Under the Flag of Chance.
618—The Case Against Judge Bernard.
619—Down to the Grave.
620—The Fatal Javelin.
621—The Ghost of Nick Carter.
622—A Strange Coincidence.
623—Pauline—A Mystery.
624—A Woman of Plots.
625—A Millionaire Swindler.
626—The Money Schemers.
627—On the Trail of the Moon.
628—The House of Mystery.
629—The Disappearance of Monsieur Gereaux.
630—An Heiress to Millions.
631—The Man in the Biograph.
632—The Time-lock Puzzle.
633—The Moving Picture Mystery.
634—The Tiger-tamer.
635—A Strange Bargain.
636—The Haunted Circus.
637—The Secret of a Private Room.
638—A Mental Mystery.
639—The Sealed Envelope.
640—The Message in Blue.
641—A Dream of Empire.
642—The Detective's Disappearance.
643—The Midnight Marauders.
644—The Child of the Jungle.
645—Nick Carter's Satanic Enemy.
646—Three Times Stolen.
647—The Great Diamond Syndicate.
648—The House of the Yellow Door.
649—The Triangle Clue.
650—The Hollingsworth Puzzle.
651—The Affair of the Missing Bonds
652—The Green Box Clue.
653—The Taxi-cab Mystery.
654—The Mystery of a Hotel Room.
655—The Tragedy of the Well.
656—The Black Hand.
657—The Black Hand Nemesis.
658—A Masterly Trick.
659—A Dangerous Man.
660—Castor, the Poisoner.
661—The Castor Riddle.
662—A Tragedy of the Bowery.
663—Four Scraps of Paper.
664—The Secret of the Mine.

PRICE, FIVE CENTS PER COPY

If you want any back numbers of our weeklies and cannot procure them from your news-dealer, they can be obtained direct from this office. Postage-stamps taken the same as money.

STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS, 79-89 SEVENTH AVE., NEW YORK